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ABSTRACT

This is compendium of readings designed for use in the secondary classroom to assist with the study of India. There are seventeen categories of readings: (1) introduction to the subcontinent; (2) description of society; (3) caste and its continuing impact; (4) leadership roles; (5) women in India; (6) role playing in society; (7) marriage; (8) children; (9) urban-rural: description of life; (10) the monsoon; (11) cultural interplay; (12) another cradle of religion; (13) history: coming to India; (14) history: background to freedom; (15) Gandhiji; (16) history: the road to independence; and (17) politics and poker. A 17-item bibliography is included. (DB)

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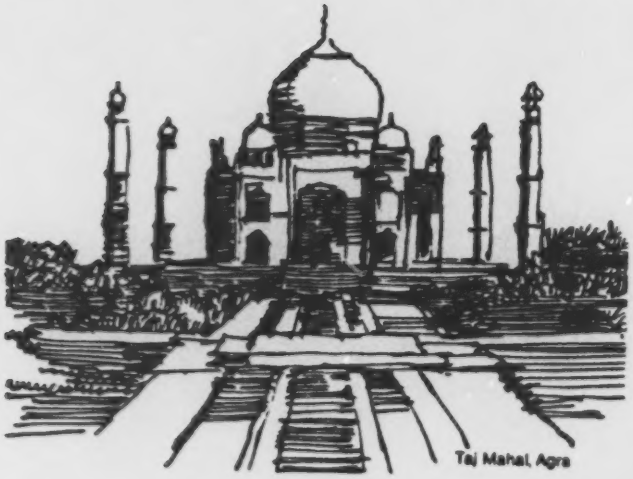

Taj Mahal, Agra

PASSAGES FROM INDIA

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VOL.2

SUBMITTED BY KENNETH GEILS

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INDIAN HISTORY & CULTURE

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India - pause for a moment, repeat that name, let it roll off your lips and around your mind. Just what does that word, that nation, that ancient civilization conjure up? Do you see the majestic marble edifice built by Shah Jahan for his dying wife - the Taj Mahal? Or is it the acrid smoke and smell of burning flesh - a cremation on the Ghats of Varanasi overlooking the beige to brown holy river - the Ganga? Is it the blinding monsoon shower of mid-July pelting down on a central Indian village; a village of mud-brick homes and rutted roads now a river of mud, of surging brown waters? Is it the leper with deformed limbs pleading with an outstretched hand for a coin, a rupee? Yes, it is all of this, and so, so very much more.

India is a land which lives in part in its glorious past. There are plenty of monuments, palaces, cities that reflect the empires and emperors that once ruled the sub-continent. The names of Tamarlane, Alexander, Ashoka, Akbar - Harappan, Gupta, Maurya, Mughal, Rajputs, Emperors and Empires that span 5000 years. India lives firmly in its past. But it stands astride the 21st century. It has placed satellites into orbit, has had a man in space on a joint venture with the Soviet Union. Nuclear power plants are being built throughout India; the atomic bomb was tested several years back. An ongoing green revolution has made India agriculturally self-sufficient; she is exporting feed grains and wheat.

It is a land that produces giants - Mother Teresa of Calcutta; Satiyat Ray, the award-winning film director; V.J. Raman, the Nobel Prize winning scientist who dealt with the refraction of light; and of course, the literary giant, Rabindranth Tagore, and the spiritual one, Mohandas K. Gandhi. A land of giants truly, as well as being a giant in its illiteracy, poverty, leprosy, slums, and population growth.

Let me offer a quote by Mark Twain:

> "So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his round. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked. Always when you think you have come to the end of her tremendous specialities and have finished hanging tags upon her...another speciality crops up and another tag is required. Perhaps it will be simplest to throw away the tags and generalize her with one all comprehensive name, as the Land of Wonders."
>
> 1896 Twain

I've broken this compendium of readings down into a dozen plus categories. They are as follows:

1. Introduction to the Sub Continent
2. Caste Plus
3. Women in India
4. Role Playing in Society
5. Marriage
6. Leadership Roles
7. History: Coming to India
8. History: Background to Freedom

9. Gandhiji
10. History: The Road to Independence
11. Cultural Interplay
12. Politics and Poker
13. Another Cradle of Religion
14. Urban and Rural: Description of Life

Certainly they reflect my choice of reading during my Fulbright Summer of studying in India. In no way is this offered as "the end all/be all"; it is merely a nice series of readings, some almost a chapter length in size; down to a terse meaty/cogent quotation. All have utility in the classroom. They could be used as lesson openers, closers, mid-lesson summaries, reinforcers, homework assignments, you fill in the blank.

I hope you and your students find them as stimulating as I have.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBCONTINENT

I have never found one among them [the Orientalists] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

MACAULEY

So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or Nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his round. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked. Always, when you think you have come to the end of her tremendous specialities and have finished hanging tags upon her.....another speciality crops up and another tag is required. Perhaps it will be simplest to throw away the tags and generalize her with one all-comprehensive name, as the Land of Wonders.

Mark Twain
1896

DESCRIPTION OF SOCIETY

THIS LENGTHY SECTION CONTAINS A MIXTURE OF MATERIALS AND TOPICS. SEVERAL PASSAGES ARE OF NEAR CHAPTER LENGTH, BUT MOST ARE TERSE QUOTATIONS OR PARAGRAPH SIZE DESCRIPTIONS OF INDIA. BROAD OVERVIEW PASSAGES ARE FOLLOWED BY MORE SPECIFIC ITEMS THAT DETAIL THE PROBLEMS BESETTING INDIA TODAY - POVERTY, DISEASE, ILLITERACY, ABUNDANCE OF COWS, POPULATION GROWTH RATE, TRANSPORTATION WOES. THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE ON THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE ARE ALSO INCLUDED. AS WELL, THERE ARE A SERIES OF MISCELLANEOUS PASSAGES COVERING TOPICS LIKE INDIA'S ROLE IN HISTORY.

Here is one of the world's great dramas: an ancient, vast and crowded land committed to the most formidably challenging exercise in mass democracy. It is a spectacle in which hope, pride, paradox and uncertainty mingle and struggle; it is conducted, on the whole, and to India's credit, in the open. It has been fascinating to be a close witness. I cannot recall that the sun has ever set on a dull day.

A nice motivating general quote that could be written on the blackboard.

* #2 - Preface

dictions, the abysses counterbalancing the pinnacles.

Although in sheer size the inheritance is mighty, there is, as time unreels, less for all. The pie must be tranched into smaller wedges. When midnight's children were born at the hour of independence in August 1947, there were 350 million Indians. Today there are more than twice that number, a sixth of mankind on a fortieth of the planet's land. There is much labour for astrologers and midwives as India swells inexorably towards a billion and beyond, its strength increasing by more than a million a month. Agricultural fertility has been more than matched by human fecundity. India also has, incidentally, 176 million cattle, a quarter of the world's cattle population, and in parts of the country it is much easier to get medical help for a cow than for a child.

Indeed, the true Indian motif is not the Taj Mahal, the elephant or the patient peasant behind the ox-drawn plough. It is the crowd, the ocean of faces in the land of multitudes, endlessly stirring, pushing, moving: as teeming and vigorous and urgent as spermatozoa. It is in this human circulation that one sees India's colour, variety, and hive-like busyness, and senses also its power, vitality and grandeur, its near-inertia, its remorseless glacial movement, as imperceptible and irrevocable as continental drift.

It unrolls for 2,000 miles from the ramparts of the Himalaya to the doffing palms of Comorin. It spreads its broad shoulders 1,700 miles from the steamy spinach-green edges of China and Burma in the east, across the burning pan of Rajasthan to the black naked mudflats of Kutch.

India is

* #2 - p. 2, 3

Of my travels throughout India I can say the same thing: whether we Indians live in Arunachal Pradesh, in the shadow of the mountains, or in Rajasthan in proximity to the desert or in Gujarat close to the sea, we live under the same sky, fanned by the same breezes, warmed by the same tropical sun. We are one people.

Nowhere, in all my travels, did I ever feel a stranger. Punjabis and Haryanvis, Arunachalis and Mizos, Gujaratis and Goans are brothers under the skin. Wherever I went I was received with the same warmth and the same affection and the same touching hospitality that cried to be written about—and praised.

.. As they say it in France, *plus ca change, plus ce'st la meme chose.* The more things change, the more they remain the same.

An Indian describing the universality of the Indian people that we (they) are one.

* #6 - p. viii, ix

POSTSCRIPT

I had set out on my many travels through India with the set purpose of rediscovering it. But in the course of those journeys I found a strange thing happening to me. I was not seeing my country through foreign-returned eyes: I was looking at it through the eyes of an Indian.

Gradually poverty ceased to bother me. People defecating on the streets became part of the scene. Beggars dying . . . but beggars had to die anyway, didn't they? Things which bothered me when I first came back home to live permanently now began to lose their impact. They were there and what can one do about them? I rationalised everything when American friends called on me. There was not enough money for improvements, see? Singapore is just a pimple, you know. Not a continent like India. How can you compare the two?

And we had a great history, we do.

I am no more the angry old man who wants Bombay to be like Manhattan, New York or Delhi like Washington (though Rajiv Gandhi's Delhi is much like Nixon's Washington) I know they will never be.

And I know that beggars will continue to die in front of Pherozeshah Mehta's statue. When I pass a corpse, I look the other way round.

What does the *Gita* say?

There never was a time when I did not exist, nor you
Nor any of these Kings
Nor is there any future in which we shall cease to be.

I see naked children picking leftovers from smelling dustbins for their evening meals, fighting with dogs and crows.

But do you know what the *Yoga Vasishta* says?

My heaven is everywhere
I am happy everywhere
There is bliss for me everywhere.

The children do not exist for me. They are not my children. I don't see them. Besides, there is nothing that I can do for them anyway. They are unreal. How can children starve? You don't see such scenes in Geneva or Paris, or Bonn, or Copenhagen. How can they do so in Bombay or Calcutta? Ridiculous.

And what does the vedic prayer say?

From the unreal, lead me to the Real,
From darkness lead me to Light
From death lead me to Immortality.

What is real and what is unreal? The real is Bombay's newly rich swigging whisky at Rs 750 a bottle till far into the night.

The real is the bloated bureaucrat being administered by a slick chick in a rented room in Bombay's 5-star hotels.

The real is the real-estate man selling apartments at Rs 1,500 a square foot.

The real is . . . .

Ah, forget it.

Here, have one for the road! Down it, man, down it!

15 India of today is an eternal one but also a disappointing one as M.V. Kamath indicates.

* #6 - p. 130, 131

16

"We are annually baked four months, boiled four more, and allowed the remaining four to become cool if we can. At this moment the sun is blazing like a furnace. The earth, soaked with oceans of rain, is steaming like a wet blanket. Vegetation is rotting all round us. Insects and undertakers are the only living creatures which seem to enjoy the climate."

A cute description of the climate.

* #14 - p. 197, 198

Out of a superficial reading of the past, then, out of the sentimental conviction that India is eternal and forever revives, there comes not a fear of further defeat and destruction, but an indifference to it. India will somehow look after itself; the individual is freed of all responsibility. And within this larger indifference there is the indifference to the fate of a friend: it is madness, Srinivas concludes, for him to think of himself as the artist's keeper.

These modern-sounding words, which reconcile Srinivas to the artist's predicament, disguise an acceptance of *karma*, the Hindu killer, the Hindu calm, which tells us that we pay in this life for what we have done in past lives: so that everything we see is just and balanced, and the distress we see is to be relished as religious theatre, a reminder of our duty to ourselves, our future lives.

The role of religion in Indian life succinctly stated.

* #10 - p. 24, 25

When men cannot observe, they don't have ideas; they have obsessions. When people live instinctive lives, something like a collective amnesia steadily blurs the past.

Victoria Memorial, Calcutta

In an active, busy country, full of passion and controversy, it is not an easy thing to grasp, this negative way of perceiving. Yet it is fundamental to an understanding of India's intellectual second-rateness, which is generally taken for granted but may be the most startling and depressing fact about the world's second most populous country, which now has little to offer the world except its Gandhian concept of holy poverty and the recurring crooked comedy of its holy men, and which, while asserting the antiquity of its civilization (and usually simply asserting, without knowledge or scholarship), is now dependent in every practical way on other, imperfectly understood civilizations.

How can anyone used from infancy to the security of the group, and the security of a minutely regulated life, become an individual, a man on his own? He will be drowned in the immensity of the unknown world; he will be lost.

To many Indians, however, poverty, just discovered, also seems to have just been created. It is, bizarrely, one of the charges most often made against Mrs Gandhi: her failure to remove poverty, as she promised in 1971: that very poverty which, until the other day, was regarded by everyone else as a fact of Indian life, and holy, a cause for pious Gandhian pride.

A party which seeks a nuclear armoury for India, and combines that with a programme for protecting the holy cow (free fodder for cows, homes for old cows), might at first be dismissed as a joke. But it isn't a joke. This party is the Jan Sangh, the National Party. It is the best-organized opposition party; with its emphasis on Hindu power, it touches many Hindu hearts, and it has a large middle-class following in the cities; for some years it controlled the Delhi municipality. In the 1971 elections one of its candidates in Delhi ran purely on the cow issue.

The ubiquitous cow poverty, holy men - a few nice passages.

* #10 - p. 104, 112, 113

Torture, like poverty, is something about India that Indians have just discovered.

'I will tell you about the poor people in Bombay,' she insisted. 'They are beautiful. They are more beautiful than the people in this room.' But now she was beginning to lie. She spoke with passion, but she didn't believe what she said. The poor of Bombay are not beautiful, even with their picturesque costumes in low-caste colours. In complexion, features, and physique the poor are distinct from the well-to-do; they are like a race apart, a dwarf race, stunted and slow-witted and made ugly by generations of undernourishment; it will take generations to rehabilitate them. The idea that the poor are beautiful was, with this girl, a borrowed idea. She had converted it into a political attitude, which she was prepared to defend. But it had not sharpened her perception.

He was too educated for India, he said; and he spoke the worn words without irony or embarrassment. He had done a course in computers in the United States, and (having money) what he wanted to do was to set up a factory to build the American equipment he had learned about. But India wasn't ready for this kind of advanced equipment, and he was thinking he might have to go back permanently to the United States.

India is old, and India continues. But all the disciplines and skills that India now seeks to exercise are borrowed. Even the ideas Indians have of the achievements of their civilization are essentially the ideas given them by European scholars in the nineteenth century. India by itself could not have rediscovered or assessed its past. Its past was too much with it, was still being lived out in the ritual, the laws, the magic – the complex instinctive life that muffles response and buries even the idea of inquiry.

India no more possesses Indian history than it possesses its art. People have an idea of the past and can quote approving things from foreign sources (a habit of which all Indians complain and of which all are guilty). But to know India, most people look inward.

A few quotes on torture, poverty, arrogance, and Indian history.

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* #10 - p. 118, 129, 130, 114

The lady who in 1975 was so sad, contemplating the tragedy of India, resenting visitors as voyeurs, would in those days have dismissed the subject of Indian poverty; she would have spoken – as middle-class ladies did then – of the happiness of the poor (greater than the happiness of others), their manners, their dignity, the way they kept their hovels clean; she would have contrasted the Indian poor with the unspeakable slum-dwellers of foreign countries.

For so many people India seemed to have gone wrong; so many people in independent India had become fugitives or sought that status. And this was in Delhi, a migrant city in the better-off north, where people were awakened and energetic, and for whom India ought to have gone right. The land stretched a thousand miles to the east and the south, through the overpopulated Gangetic plain and the rock plateau of the Deccan. At the end of that bad evening it seemed barely imaginable – the huts of the landless along the Poona–Bombay road, the child labourers of Bihar among the blond hanks of jute, the chawls and squatters' settlements in central Bombay, the starved squatters in bright cotton slipping in and out of the stone ruins of Vijayanagar, the famine-wasted bodies just outside Jaipur City. It was like a calamity that no one could come to terms with. I was without the Indian defences, which were also the attitudes that contributed to the calamity. I could only wait for the morning.

India as a nation gone wrong - 850,000,000 people with as may problems.

* #10 - p. 137, 140

It is a cause of concern to the Indian scientific community – which feels itself vulnerable in India – that many of those men who are so daring and original abroad should, when they are lured back to India, collapse into ordinariness and yet remain content, become people who seem unaware of their former worth, and seem to have been brilliant by accident. They have been claimed by the lesser civilization, the lesser idea of *dharma* and self-fulfilment. In a civilization reduced to its forms, they no longer have to strive intellectually to gain spiritual merit in their own eyes; that same merit is now to be had by religious right behaviour, correctness.

The scientist returning to India sheds the individuality he acquired during his time abroad; he regains the security of his caste identity, and the world is once more simplified. There are minute rules, as comforting as bandages; individual perception and judgement, which once called forth his creativity, are relinquished as burdens, and the man is once more a unit in his herd, his science reduced to a skill. The blight of caste is not only untouchability and the consequent deification in India of filth; the blight, in an India that tries to grow, is also the over-all obedience it imposes, its ready-made satisfactions, the diminishing of adventurousness, the pushing away from men of individuality and the possibility of excellence.

Brain drain and the stifling of Indian creativity.

23

* #10 - p. 170, 171

India today is chronological time stretched out across linear space. The history of man—not just man in India, but man anywhere—lies before you in the subcontinent, one of the oldest centers of human habitation. Primitive tribal people carry on their lives today within easy reach of India's towns and centers of modern economic life.

Contemporary society in India—as elsewhere—resembles the layers of an archeological excavation, which reveal ancient cultural 'outcroppings' still intact, more recent layers severely eroded, and no significant contribution of the past entirely lost.

India, in short, while unique in some ways, gives us a view today of what the West used to be, as well as what it is. To come to terms with India, therefore, is to come to terms with important parts of our own past.

Consciously or not, we usually assign to each national culture a position on a social evolutionary scale based on man's history as viewed by Westerners. Simplistically, such a scale often begins with "barbarism," moves through "early" and "classical" periods of civilization, acknowledges retrogression in epochs of "darkness," and reaches an acceptable level of "development" in Victorian England. Contemporary America is often appended as a still "higher" level of "advancement". Is it appropriate to assume this scale in discussing India, or any foreign culture?

India today, yesterday, and perhaps tomorrow.

* #3 - p. 3, 4

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The intense struggle of generations of men' merely to survive is part of every society's heritage. In America and the West we forget this now and assume that the natural physical condition of man is reasonably comfortable—food in abundance,

. Do they need or want our pity, or our moments of mental anguish when we see a picture of a starving child? Apparently not.

. Most Indians see, repetitiveness, a patterning in their lives, and assume wordly conditions remain the same, only the peoples' experience of them changes as lives are re-lived in new human guises

The three pages here and following offer brief quotes on Indians and their view of India and its life.

* #3 - p. 6

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They lack deadly serious and tragic themes common in classical Greek and later European traditional tales and express Indians' sense of optimism, if not exuberance, about life.

Indians enjoy life in its physical aspect and are not beset by a pervading sense of tragedy, or sin. Hindu art and sculpture reveal a restfulness and sensuality that is still evident in manners and in dress, particularly of women.

Indians are not passive or non-violent; neither do the lessons of the major ethical works of Hinduism and Islam require abstinence from fighting. Social norms, however, tend to repress an individual's uninhibited flow of passion and aggression.

But Indians have a great martial tradition and are some of the world's best fighters in war, and there is considerable violence in private and public life today, despite the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

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* #3 - p. 40

There is a cycle that Europeans—by Europeans I mean all Westerners, including Americans—tend to pass through. It goes like this: first stage, tremendous enthusiasm—everything Indian is marvelous; second stage, everything Indian not so marvelous; third stage, everything Indian abominable. For some people it ends there, for others the cycle renews itself and goes on.

The most salient fact about India is that it is very poor and very backward. There are so many other things to be said about it but this must remain the basis of all of them.

People dying of starvation in the streets, children kidnapped and maimed to be sent out as beggars—but there is no point in making a catalog of the horrors.

in reincarnation. If things are not to your liking in this life, there is always the chance that in your next life everything will be different.

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* #4 - p. 13, 14, 15

SCINTILLATING SERPENTS SUDDENLY spattered the sky, as a burst of fireworks exploded over the slum. Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, was celebrated on the darkest night of the year and marked the official arrival of winter. In a country where all is myth and symbol, it represented the victory of light over darkness. Illuminations commemorated one of the greatest epic stories of the legend of Ramayana, the return of the goddess Sita, brought back by her divine consort Rama, after her abduction to Ceylon by the demon Ravana. In Bengal, it is also thought that the souls of the departed begin their journey on this date in the year, and lamps are lit to light their way. It is also the festival of the goddess Lakshmi, who never enters a dark house, but only the houses that are brightly lit. And, since she is the goddess of wealth and beauty, she is venerated in the hope that she will bring happiness and prosperity. Finally, for many Bengalis this is also the festival of Kali, the somber divinity who symbolizes the dark trials through which man must pass in order to attain the light. For the inhabitants of the City of Joy, Diwali is, above all, the hope at the end of the night.

Like other households in Hindu India, the hovels in the slum were the setting that night for frenzied card games. The festival perpetuated a custom born of another legend, that of the famous dice game in which god Shiva wins back the fortune he has lost during a previous game against Parvati, his faithless wife. To achieve this victory the god enlisted help from his divine colleague Vishnu, who conveniently materialized as a pair of dice. Thus the festival of Diwali was also a form of homage to gambling.

Every Hindu gambled that night, be it at cards, dice, or rou-

28

An abortion story from The City of Joy.

lette. They played with ten-, five-, or one-rupee notes, or even with just a few *paisas*. When they had no money, they played with a banana, a handful of almonds, a few sweetmeats. It mattered not what they played with, just that they played. Even Kovalski could not escape the ritual. For, despite the fact that it was occupied by Muslims, even Nizamudhin Lane had its wild spark.

The old Hindu from the tea shop invited his foreign neighbor to join in a heated game of poker that went on until dawn. As in the legend, Shiva's devotee was allowed to win back the twenty rupees his opponent had taken from him, in the very last round.

It was as he was returning home that morning that Stephan Kovalski heard the news. Selima, the wife of his neighbor Mehboub, who was seven months pregnant, had disappeared.

The young Muslim woman had been discreetly approached by one of her neighbors three days earlier at the fountain. With her face pockmarked from smallpox, the portly Mumtaz Bibi was something of a mystery figure in this world where promiscuity rendered everybody transparent. Although her husband was only a simple factory worker, she enjoyed a certain opulence. She lived in the alley's only brick house and it was not exactly a hovel. From her ceiling hung a rare and wondrous ornament: an electric light bulb. It was said, too, that a number of rooms in the surrounding compounds were her property, yet no one was able to specify precisely where her money came from. Malicious tongues had it that outside the neighborhood Mumtaz exercised occult powers. The local Mafia godfather had been seen going into her house. There was talk of traffic in *bhang*, Indian marijuana, of the clandestine distillation of alcohol, of prostitution, and even of a network for buying up little girls for brothels in Delhi and Bombay. No one, however, had ever managed to support such slander with any proof.

"Stop off at my house on the way back from the fountain," she said to Selima. "I have an interesting proposition for you."

Despite her surprise, Selima did as she was asked. The poor woman had become little more than a shadow since her husband had lost his job. Her beautiful smooth face now looked haggard, and the small stone in her nostril had long since tumbled into the usurer's coffer. She, who had always carried herself with such dignity in her worn sari, now walked like an old woman. Only her belly remained unaffected, a belly that was swollen, taut, superb.

* #8 - p. 168-173

She carried it with pride, for it was all she had. Two months later she would give birth to the tiny being that stirred inside her—her fourth child. Mumtaz Bibi had prepared a plateful of tidbits and two small cups of tea with milk. She motioned her visitor to sit down on the low platform she used as a bed.

"Are you set on keeping that child?" she asked, pointing at Selima's belly. "If you'd agree to sell it to me, I could make you a good deal."

"Sell you my child," stammered Selima, flabbergasted.

"Not exactly your child," the fat woman corrected her, "only what you've got inside you at the moment. And for a good price: two thousand rupees (two hundred U.S. dollars)."

The opulent dowager of Nizamudhin Lane was carrying on the very latest of Calcutta's clandestine professions: the sale of human embryos and fetuses. The mainsprings of the industry were a network of foreign buyers who scoured the third world on behalf of international laboratories and institutes for genetic research. The majority of these buyers were Swiss or American. They used the embryos and fetuses either for scientific work or in the manufacture of rejuvenating products for a clientele of privileged people in specialized establishments in Europe and America. The demand had provoked a fruitful trade for which Calcutta was one of the central sources. One of the recognized providers of this unusual merchandise was an ex-pharmacist named Sushil Vohra. He obtained his supplies from several clinics that specialized in abortions, and he looked after the packaging of the consignments which left for Europe or the U.S.A., via Moscow on the Soviet airline, Aeroflot's, regular flight.

The most sought-after fetuses were the most developed ones, but these were also the most difficult to come by, a fact which accounted for the high sum offered to Selima, compared with the less than two hundred rupees paid for an embryo that was only two months old. In fact, it was very rare indeed for a woman who had reached her sixth or seventh month of pregnancy to part with her child. Even in the poorest of families the birth of children is always greeted with joy. They are the only riches of those who have nothing.

Mumtaz assumed a maternal tone.

"Think good and hard about it, little one. You already have

three children. Your husband's out of work and I've heard it said that your family doesn't eat every day. This is not perhaps the time to add another mouth to your household. Whereas, you know, with two thousand rupees you can fill plenty of plates of rice."

Poor Selima knew that only too well. Finding a few peelings and scraps to put on her family's plates was her daily torture.

"What's my husband going to say when I come home with two thousand rupees and nothing in my . . . ?"

The dowager gave her a smile of complicity.

"That doesn't have to be a problem. I'll give you the two thousand rupees in small installments. Your husband won't think anything of it and you'll be able to buy something to feed your family every day."

The two women parted on these words, but just as Selima was leaving, Mumtaz called her back.

"There's just one thing I'd forgotten," she added. "If you agree, you needn't have any fears about yourself. The operation is always carried out under the very best conditions. What's more, it only takes a few minutes. You'll only be away from home for three hours at the most."

Strangely enough the idea of danger had not even crossed Mehboub's wife's mind; to a poor woman from the slums death was of no real concern.

All day and all night the wretched woman was haunted by that visit. Every movement she felt inside her seemed like a protest against the horrible exchange that had just been suggested to her. She could never agree to what amounted to murder, not even for two thousand rupees; but then there were other voices too that haunted Selima in the night, the familiar voices of her three other children crying out with hunger. At dawn she made her decision.

It was all fixed for two days later. As soon as he got the news, the trafficker Sushil Vohra prepared a large jar of antiseptic fluid. A seven-month-old embryo was almost the same size and shape as a newborn baby. He took the container to a small clinic where the operation was to take place. The festival of light posed a few problems. The usual Hindu surgeons had all gone off to play cards or dice, but Sushil Vohra was not one to allow such obstacles to stop him. Undaunted, he sent for a Muslim surgeon.

The medical establishment into which Mumtaz directed Se-

lima had few pretensions to the title of clinic. It was a kind of dispensary made up of a single room divided in two by a curtain. One half served as a reception and treatment area, the other as an operating room. The surgical equipment was of the most basic kind: a metal table, a fluorescent light, one bottle of alcohol and another of ether standing on a shelf. There was no sterilizer, no oxygen, and no reserve supply of blood. There weren't even any instruments. Each surgeon had to bring his own personal case.

Disturbed by the smell of ether that had impregnated the floor and walls, Selima sank down on a stool that constituted the only piece of furniture. The act that she was bracing herself to have performed seemed to her progressively more monstrous, yet she approached it with resignation. "This evening my husband and children will be able to eat," she kept telling herself. Between her blouse and her skin she could already feel the friction of the first bills Mumtaz had given her: thirty rupees, enough to buy almost twenty-five pounds of rice.

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The surgeon called for the operation was a man in his fifties with a receding hairline and large hairy ears. He asked Selima to lie down on the table and examined her attentively. Behind him, the trafficker was growing impatient. The Aeroflot plane was due to take off in four hours. He would only just have time to take the jar to Dum Dum Airport. He had alerted his contact in New York. The transaction would earn him about a thousand U.S. dollars net.

"What are you waiting for, Doctor?"

The surgeon took out his instrument case, slipped on a gown, asked for some soap and a basin to wash his hands, then steeped a large piece of cotton in ether and placed it over Selima's nose and mouth. He toyed nervously with his mustache while the young woman lost consciousness, then took up his lancet. Twenty minutes later, mopping up with gauze compresses the blood flowing from the uterus, he placed the fetus with the placenta in the hands of the trafficker. The child would have been a boy.

It was after he had cut the umbilical cord that disaster struck. A reddish bubbling issued from Selima's womb, followed by black dots, and then a veritable torrent of blood spurted forth in a single gush. In a matter of seconds the floor of the room was covered in it. The surgeon tried to compress the lower abdomen with a very tight bandage, but the red tide continued to escape. He undid the

dressings and tried to feel out the position of the abdominal aorta. Applying his fist to the vessel, he pressed with all his might in an attempt to stem the hemorrhage. Without the assistance of a massive dose of coagulants, however, all his efforts were in vain. He tried to find her pulse, but Selima's wrist was already showing only the most imperceptible and irregular beat. At that point, he heard a door bang behind him and turned round. The trafficker had left with the jar. Mumtaz Bibi, the dowager, did likewise, having first swiftly recovered her thirty rupees from her victim's bodice. The surgeon spread the old sari over the dying woman. Then he took off his blouse soaked in blood and carefully folded it up. He arranged his instruments in their box and put everything into his canvas attaché case. And he too left.

Selima remained alone with the employee of the "clinic." Above the grinding of the fan the sounds of voices could be heard coming from outside. The piece of cotton impregnated with ether still concealed her face. The employee was a stunted little man with bushy eyebrows and a hooked nose, like an eagle's beak. To him the bloodless body on the table was worth more than all the Diwali card parties put together. He knew a useful address where they cut up unidentified corpses to recover the skeletons for export.

As soon as the diplomat had left, Margareta loaded Kovalski onto a rickshaw and took him to the City Hospital, one of Bengal's capital's main medical centers. With its carefully manicured lawn, pool, fountain, and bougainvillea walk, the establishment offered rather fine surroundings. A red sign in the emergency wing pointed to a vast building, the doors and windows of which were nearly all broken. Margareta was tempted to ask the rickshaw puller to turn back. Even the most painful visions of the City of Joy had not prepared her for the shock of the sights that awaited her: bloodstained dressings strewn about the corridors, broken beds serving as trash cans, mattresses bursting open and crawling with bugs. Wherever you went you found yourself treading on some

A hospital in Calcutta.

form of debris. Worst of all, however, were the people who, haunted the place. The severely ill—suffering from encephalitis, coronary thrombosis, tetanus, typhoid, typhus, cholera, infected abscesses, people who had been injured, undergone amputations, or been burned—were lying all over, often on the bare floor.

Margareta eventually managed to dig out a bamboo stretcher on which she installed the unconscious Kovalski. Since no one came to examine him, she slipped a note into the hand of a male nurse to procure a bottle of serum and a syringe which she, herself, inserted into the patient's arm. Then she asked for anticholera drugs. Like so many other establishments, however, the City Hospital was short of medicines. The press frequently denounced the pilfering that went on in hospitals and kept flourishing numerous little pharmacies outside its walls.

"I'm thirsty . . ."

Kovalski opened his eyes to the nightmare world of this "hospital for everybody." There was neither a jug nor water at the patient's bedside. From time to time a boy came around with a waterskin. He charged fifty *paisas* a cup (five U.S. cents). At the end of the corridor were the latrines. The door had been torn off and the drain was blocked. Excrement had spilled over and spread into the corridor, much to the delight of the flies.

Hundreds of sick people jostled with each other daily outside the doors to establishments such as this, in the hope of receiving some form of treatment, of obtaining a place in a bed—or on the floor—in order at least to be able to eat for a few days. There was the same crush almost everywhere. In some maternity wings it was perfectly possible to find three mothers and their babies bedded down on a single mattress, a situation which sometimes caused the asphyxia of newborn babies. Regular press campaigns condemned the negligence, corruption and theft that paralysed certain hospitals.

In the hospital where Stephan Kovalski was, a costly cobalt bomb had remained out of use for months because no one would take the responsibility for spending the sixty-eight hundred rupees necessary to have it repaired. Elsewhere a cardiac resuscitation unit was closed because of the lack of air-conditioning. In yet another hospital the two defibrillators and ten out of the twelve electrocardiograph machines had broken down, as had half the

* #8 - p. 208-211

bedside monitors. Oxygen and gas cylinders for sterilization were lacking nearly everywhere. "The only piece of equipment that seems to function properly, but then again, only when there are no power cuts, is the apparatus for electric shock treatment in Gobra Mental Hospital," one newspaper reported. It had not been possible to open the new surgical wing at one large hospital simply because the Health Service had not yet approved the nomination of an elevator attendant. The lack of technicians and plates nearly everywhere meant that most patients had to wait four months for an X ray and weeks for any analysis. At a hospital near the Sealdah Station, eleven out of twelve ambulances were broken down or abandoned, with their roofs smashed in, their engines stolen, and their wheels stripped. In many operating units, the containers of forceps, scalpels, clips, and catgut were nearly empty, their contents having been stolen by staff members. The few instruments that actually remained were rarely sharp. The catgut was frequently of such poor quality that stitches burst. In many places reserve blood supplies were virtually nonexistent. In order to procure the precious liquid before an operation, patients or their families sometimes had to resort to those specialist racketeers with whom Hasari Pal had already been dealing. Such parasites found in the hospitals idyllic opportunities for self-enrichment. Some of them sandbagged the sick (especially poor people who had come up from the country) and, when they arrived, promised them immediate hospitalization or a medical examination in exchange for some money. Others passed themselves off as bona fide doctors, luring their victims into consultation rooms manned by nurses who were partners in complicity. They then asked the women to hand over their jewels in preparation for an X ray and vanished.

In some hospitals the pilfering of food intended for patients had assumed such proportions that meals had to be transported in padlocked carts. In spite of these precautions, large quantities of food and milk were regularly diverted to the innumerable tea shops that had set themselves up in the vicinity of the hospital. Sugar and eggs were systematically spirited away to be resold on the spot at prices twice as low as in the market. The newspapers revealed that such pilfering was not confined to food. Some establishments had no more doors or windows. At night, treatment had

to be given by candlelight: all the electric light bulbs had disappeared.

As is often the case in India, however, the best fortunately mixed with the worst. In all these establishments there was also a network of people who bonded together to dispel isolation, anonymity, horror. A few mattresses away from Kovalski lay a poor fellow who, following an accident, had undergone one of the most delicate and daring operations of modern surgery, a spinal fusion of the rachis involving the grafting of the vertebral column. Day by day, Kovalski followed his progress. In a communal ward that was sordid in so many other aspects, that man was the object of admirable care and attention. Each morning the nurses got him up and helped him gradually regain the use of his legs. Every time he did his rounds, the heavily overburdened surgeon would find the time to examine and to talk with him, demonstrating as much solicitous concern as competence. A few beds farther on, a mother squatted on the floor beside her baby's cradle. The child was suffering from meningitis. No one would have thought of preventing the poor woman from remaining with her infant, and the people in charge of the food never went past without offering her also a bowl of rice.

Highly surprised to discover that they had a *sahib* as a companion in their hardship, several patients dragged themselves over to ask Stephan to decipher the bits of scrap paper used for prescriptions. This was an occasion for Kovalski to marvel at the conscientiousness and precision with which some of the overburdened doctors prescribed their treatment for even the most anonymous of their patients.

Nothing was ever totally rotten in this inhuman city.

"But it was the tragic cases that were most prevalent. One day I was brought a little girl whose body was atrociously burned all over. A locomotive had released its steam when she was picking up remnants of coal along the railway line. On another occasion, a young Hindu girl showed me a light patch on her pretty face. The mere prick of a needle in the center of the patch was enough for Bandona to be able to diagnose an illness hardly studied in the American medical faculties: leprosy. Again there was the young father of a family who was suffering from acute syphilis. I had to explain to him, via my young Assamese assistant, the dangers of contagion involved for his wife and children. Or this mother who brought me a lifeless bundle of flesh to which diphtheria had reduced her baby. Not to mention all those who came because a miracle effected by the 'great white *daktar*' was their only hope: people with cancer, severe heart conditions, madmen, blind men, the mute, the paralyzed, the deformed.

"Most unbearable of all, and something I thought I would never get used to, was the sight of those rickety babies with their inflated stomachs, tiny monstrosities placed on my table by their supplicant mothers. At a year or eighteen months they weighed not so much as nine pounds. They were suffering so acutely from deficiency that their fontanels hadn't closed. Deprived of calcium, the bone structure of their heads had been deformed and their dolichocephalic features gave them all the look of Egyptian mummies. With this degree of malnutrition, the majority of their brains' gray cells had probably been destroyed. Even if I did manage to pull them through, they would most probably be idiots—medically classified idiots."

Children and disease in Calcutta.

* #8 - p. 316, 317

India, asserts that India is producing today more and more "subhumans" because of inadequate nourishment.* According to this expert, the health of generations to come will find itself in jeopardy. A hundred and forty million Indians at least, that is, nearly half the population of the United States, are likely to suffer from malnutrition. Of the twenty-three million children born each year, only three million, according to this same authority, have a chance of reaching adulthood in good health. Four million are condemned to die before the age of eight or to become unproductive citizens because of mental and physical defects. Because of nutritional deficiencies, 55 percent of all children under the age of five will manifest psychic and neurological problems occasioning behavioral disorders, while several million adults suffer from goiters, causing similar disorders.

[On the second day, a young Muslim woman in a black tunic and veil placed a baby wrapped in a piece of rag on Max's table. Fixing on the doctor a wild look, she unfastened her tunic, bared her chest, and cupped her two breasts in her hands.

"They're dry!" she exclaimed. "Dry! Dry!"

* Dr. C. Gopalan, "The Nutrition Factor," *Indian Express*, January 9, 1983.

Then her gaze fell upon the calendar hanging on the wall. At the sight of the chubby baby displayed on the piece of cardboard she let out a shriek. "Nestlé makes your children healthy," the slogan on it read. The young mother hurled herself at the calendar and tore it to shreds. At that moment another woman burst in. Pushing aside the young Muslim mother, she rushed at the American and thrust her baby into his arms.

"Take him!" she wailed. "Take him away to your country! Save him!"

It was an inconceivable action that translated the enormity of the despair these mothers felt. "For nowhere else," Kovalski would say, "had I seen women adore their children in quite the way that they did here, where they deprived themselves, sacrificed themselves, gave their life's blood that their infants might live. No, it was not possible: so much love could not be lost.]

Life and death in Calcutta.

* #8 - p. 317, 318

Truly India's hunger-inspired genius threatens to sink her. Every success I heard of convinced me that India, swamped by invention, was hopeless and must fail unless what I saw later that night ceases to exist. It is the simplest fact of Indian life: there are too many Indians.

We seemed to move through a city of the dead. There was hardly a suggestion of life in those still and vacant streets. Even the crows were silent. But everywhere on the ground lay sleeping natives — hundreds and hundreds. They lay stretched at full length and tightly wrapped in blankets, heads and all. Their attitude and rigidity counterfeited death.

Too many Indians.

* #13 - p. 142

If resource depletion is made the standard for determining population control, then surely it is the United States and Western Europe which should restrict additions to their numbers, each one of which represents ten or twenty times the consumption that an Indian does! Put another way, can the globe physically tolerate the spread of American-style affluence? If not, then will the world's political systems tolerate lasting gross inequalities among nations?

Population control.

. There is awful poverty—which one can find also in Caracas, or Jakarta, or Yokahama, or in many American cities and farms—and there like in robust economic activity exemplified by overflowing market places, people busy earning profits in any way they can, scientific advances in the areas of major manufacturing and farming. Still, the atmosphere of general deprivation is everpresent, and the more conditions improve the more suffering comes to light. What makes India's poverty unique and striking is that a larger number of people are affected than anywhere else. India specializes in magnitudes, of many sorts.

India's unique poverty.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

* #3 - p. 23 42

To live at the margin of subsistence meant, in real terms, that "some customarily need to consume undigested grain picked from the excrement of cattle as they struggle for survival." And, finally, "to be utterly dependent for life on 'superiors' exercising absolute and often capricious authority was the common experience of the Bihar peasant."

Those were Jannuzi's findings in the mid-1970s.

A diet of excrement covered green.

* #6 - p. 72

More than a third of the world's illiterates live in India, so that a goal enshrined in the constitution, of free and compulsory education for all up to the age of fourteen, remains distant. It is a common sight in town and country to see a boy or young man who can read, surrounded by a small group as he quotes from a newspaper.

The infant mortality rate of 129 per 1,000 is one of the highest in the world and compares with 56 in China, 92 in Brazil, 28 in Russia and 14 in Britain and the United States. Life expectancy is officially put at 54 years, but is probably lower than that. It is one of the lowest in the world, about the same as in the United States at the turn of the century.

The fact that women may expect shorter lives than men says something about the treatment of girls and women in a society where custom, religion and economic demands place strong emphasis on the male. There are 24 million fewer females than males largely because of the tradition of discrimination against women and girls, who are seen as a burden and a future debt.

To a man on the land sons are workers as well as inheritors

The new Indian is more likely than not to be a Hindu, one of the 582 million and 83 per cent majority. He might also be one of the substantial Muslim minority of 77 million; or one of 14 million Sikhs, so busy and distinctive that there seems to be more of them than that; 18 million Christians, who will cook both beef and bacon; 3.5 million Jains who would not hurt a fly; or 5 million tolerant Buddhists, a mere splinter of the great faith in the land of its birth. He stands a one in twelve chance of being born into one of the aboriginal tribes which inhabit forests and remote regions, and which are gradually being drawn into the mainstream; and a one in ten chance of being a Brahmin, the upper crust of society; and a one in seven chance of being born into the community of those Hindus whose place is, strictly speaking, outside the caste structure and who are graded as untouchables, also known as harijans, Mahatma Gandhi's appellation, meaning god's children, which has done nothing to improve their treatment.

The next six pages offer descriptions of India from Trevor Fishbuck's India File, a treasure of anecdotal and factual material.

* #2 - p. 11, 12

They object to western representations of their home as a land of abject poverty and resent the cameras' lingering on the hopeless rock-bottom poor with the suggestion that this is all of India and that India does not care. They do not mind examinations and representations of poverty, but they bristle when their country is represented by it.

Although, statistically speaking, the new Indian is likely to be born into a poor farming family, the growth of education and economic opportunity provides an increasing possibility of improvement. He can aspire to be a commerce rajah, founding a new dynasty like the Birlas and Tatas, the great business families of India. He can hope to run an hotel empire, or prosper as a merchant or factory owner; or be a well-off farmer, perhaps in Punjab, with tractors and other machines, and a twice-a-year trip from Amritsar to Birmingham to see how his relations are doing. He might be a doctor with British and American degrees on his surgery wall, and the status symbol of an imported car; or a professor, an engineer or a high flier in the civil service, with Scotch whisky in his cupboard (preferably Johnny Walker and Chivas Regal, for these have cachet, and Indian drinkers are label conscious).

He might have a position in a firm, or be one of those tireless and patient businessmen with glass fibre briefcases to be found beginning their migrations early in the morning at the dismal airports in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, enduring waiting room seating made of unyielding plastic (instead of cheap, indigenous, comfortable cane), apparently designed by an ergonomist with a grudge against humanity, and lighting that might have been installed by a conspiracy of opticians wanting business.

In pursuit of fortune or fame the new Indian might enter the film industry, the largest in the world. If a man aspiring to stardom he will have a rather overfed handsomeness like that of a spoilt only son; if a woman, she will tend to the Rubensesque voluptuous and will spend much of her career getting wet, the soaked sari being the acme of modern Indian eroticism.

The newcomer might also join the million who make up the largest standing army in the world. India is proud of its might and there is no cavilling at the cost of maintaining it. The profession of arms is admired and respected in a country that once made a reputation for non-violent protest. The martial strain is vigorous, and the traditional fighting peoples from the warring north, the Rajputs, Punjabis and Sikhs, are well represented in the forces. So are Gurkhas from Nepal.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted the Indian national flag to bear the device of a spinning wheel, with its connotation of humility, the development of spiritual resources and self-sufficiency, the symbol of his philosophy and campaign of non-violence. But such a symbol was hardly likely to appeal in a country of ancient martial tradition and great size and power, with neighbours to consider, and its assertive way to make in the world. Instead India chose Ashoka's wheel for its tricolour, badge of a warrior emperor's might. For its national emblem it took the logglyph of Ashoka, a fist made from four lions sitting back to back.

45 * #2 - p. 14, 13

India is a gathering of disparities whose nearest equivalent would be a united states of Europe. The centrifugal tugs are powerful. A prime minister has to be like a juggler who keeps a dozen plates spinning on a stage. There is the gulf between rich and poor, the gap between impatient, scientific and business India and ground-down medieval India. There is the oppression of harijans, linguistic and regional rivalry, enduring religious and caste tensions.

Although Indians had hoped for progress towards a casteless society, and there is a constitutional commitment to one, caste plays an increasingly important role in politics and the power structure. Caste is the enduring and resilient basis of social organization and provides politicians with ready-made groups, interests and loyalties, easily mobilized. It is through group power that people feel they can get things done. Even voting is a contradiction, an individual action in a society where most actions are collective. The country is committed to helping harijans, lower castes and tribal people by reserving places for them in colleges, government offices and legislatures. But this positive discrimination, a means of economic advancement, creates incongruities and resentments. Jobs go on quota grounds rather than merit and 'backwardness' has become a vested interest. The economics of caste, the caste block vote, and the fight for advantage among the quotas, is central. It would be unrealistic to expect representative politics to develop in India except on the basis of caste.

At the same time the natural suspicions built into the Indian character, a reluctance to combine except with members of one's own close group, have formed the background of the endlessly fragmenting opposition parties. From time to time they talk of forming a united front to challenge the government and end up being more splintered and confused than ever. most of the non-communist parties have no economic or social programme and no philosophy and are led by old men with small followings. The best organized opposition is the communist party of West Bengal Communism, Bengal-style, is one way in which Bengalis assert their identity. Few communists can ever envisage their philosophy penetrating the Hindu bulk; in any case such ideologies as communism and socialism, as they are understood in the west, have never really taken root in India and exist mostly as labels. In India caste and religion and language are the more important stuff of politics for ordinary people.

Neither the authorities, nor the people themselves, seem particularly concerned about the regularity with which worn out and overloaded buses, driven by incompetents, fall off mountain roads and bridges and drive into canals and rivers. Bus crashes are a regular and routine form of death. Buses are ramshackle, poorly maintained, crowded and dirty. Owners are cynical and careless and drivers often unlicensed and untrained. They are also often drunk. Bribes take care of small details like driving tests and licences. The roads are lawless and the enforcement of regulations is made almost impossible because of the great need of ordinary people for bus services, even bad ones. The enforcement of even the simplest standards would cause severe dislocation and enrage the travelling public. People climb into their dreadful transport and trust to their gods, no doubt thinking that prayer is more reliable than the wild-eyed ruffian at the wheel.

Another sort of quackery also flourishes: there are thousands of unqualified men who set themselves up in business as medical practitioners, trading on fear, superstitions and ignorance. There are all manner of sex advisers, abortionists, medicine drummers and sundry witch doctors, but worst of all are the untrained men who conduct operations with razor blades and rusty scissors. In mid-1982 the police arrested five young men who had been conducting peripatetic eye operation clinics in Rajasthan.

* #2 - p. 102, 104

. Indian society sets so much store by qualifications that failure cannot be countenanced. People believe they are born to follow a certain path, their dharma, and education and examinations are part of that process. A student is not on his own; he is, rather, a representative of his family and connected with the past and the future. Many educators and their students conspire to ensure that examinations are a door that can be opened, rather than a filter. Parents willingly pay bribes and fees to those who deal in leaked question papers because family pride is at stake.

Many educators and students, of course, are honest and the tradition of cheating embitters and confuses them. The honest are dismayed to see that degrees and diplomas can be had through manipulation and that they eventually lose their value. Students in some places have terrorized, or tried to terrorize, college authorities into permitting copying during examinations. In a college in Bihar students campaigned to win the right to cheat in examinations*.

* #2 - p. 105

The gap between private cleanliness and public squalor is one of the notable paradoxes of India. Men empty their nostrils and throats in front of you. Buses run you off the road. Electricity junction boxes lie broken open in a tangle of fuses and scrap wire. Farmers pay labourers in poisonous lentils, which lead to paralysis and crippling, just as they have done for centuries. Bodies lie for hours on railway lines or roads, a public spectacle, before someone makes a decision to move them. People flee after road accidents, rather than help the injured, for fear of becoming involved. Concern, altruism and a fire for reform are not the attributes of the new politicians. The low-caste man bows his head: he has deserved his lot, and perhaps, after this expiation, his next life will be better.

* #2 - p. 114

The two great faiths thus planted on the subcontinent were as different as the manifestations of man's eternal vocation to believe could be. Where Islam reposed on a man, the Prophet, and a precise text, the Koran, Hinduism was a religion without a founder, a revealed truth, a dogma, a structured liturgy or a churchly establishment. For Islam, the Creator stood apart from his creation, ordering and presiding over his work. To the Hindu, the Creator and his creation were one and indivisible, and God was a kind of all-pervading cosmic spirit, to whose manifestations there would be no limit.

The Hindu, as a result, worshiped God in almost any form he chose: in animals, ancestors, sages, spirits, natural forces, divine incarnations, the Absolute. He could find God manifested in snakes, phalluses, water, fire, the planets and stars.

To the Moslem, on the contrary, there was but one God, Allah, and the Koran forbade the faithful to represent him in any shape or form. Idols and idolatry to the Moslem were abhorrent, paintings and statues blasphemous. A mosque was a spare, solemn place, in which the only decorations permitted were abstract designs and the repeated representation of the ninety-nine names of God.

Idolatry was Hinduism's natural form of expression, and a Hindu temple was the exact opposite of a mosque. It was a kind of spiritual shopping center, a clutter of goddesses with snakes coiling from their heads, six-armed gods with fiery tongues, elephants with wings talking to the clouds, jovial little monkeys, dancing maidens and squat phallic symbols.

Moslems worshiped in a body, prostrating themselves on the floor of the mosque in the direction of Mecca, chanting in unison their Koranic verses. A Hindu worshiped alone, with only his thoughts linking him and the god he could select from a bewildering pantheon of three to three and a half million divinities. At the core of this pantheon was a central trinity—Brahma, the Creator; Shiva, the Destroyer; Vishnu, the Preserver—positive, negative, neutral forces, eternally in search, as their worshipers were supposed to be, of the perfect equilibrium, the attainment of the Absolute. Behind them were gods and goddesses for the seasons, the weather, the crops, and the ailments of man, like Mariamman, the smallpox goddess revered each year in a ritual strikingly similar to the Jewish Passover.

The greatest barrier to Hindu-Moslem understanding, however, was not metaphysical, but social. It was the system that ordered Hindu society, *caste*. According to Vedic scripture, caste originated with Brahma, the Creator. Brahmans, the highest caste, sprang from his mouth; Kshatriyas, warriors and rulers, from his biceps; Vaisyas, traders and businessmen, from his thigh; Sudras, artisans and craftsmen, from his feet. Below them were the outcastes, the Untouchables, who had not sprung from divine soil.

The origins of the caste system, however, were notably less divine than those suggested by the Vedas. It had been a diabolic scheme employed by Hinduism's Aryan founders, to perpetuate the enslavement of India's dark, Dravidian populations. The word for caste, *varda*, meant "color," and centuries later, the dark skins of India's Untouchables gave graphic proof of the system's real origins.

The five original divisions had multiplied like cancer cells into almost 5,000 subcastes, 1,886 for the Brahmans alone. Every occupation had its caste, splitting society up into a myriad closed guilds into which a man was condemned by his birth to work, live, marry and die. So precise were their definitions that an iron smelter was in a different caste than an ironsmith.

Linked to the caste system was the second concept basic to Hinduism, reincarnation. A Hindu believed that his body was only a temporary garment for his soul. His body's life was only one of his soul's many incarnations in its journey through eternity, a chain beginning and ending in some nebulous merger with the cosmos. The *karma*, the accumulated good and evil of each mortal lifetime, was a soul's continuing burden. It determined whether in its next incarnation that soul would migrate up or down in the hierarchy of caste. Caste had been a superb device to perpetuate India's social inequities by giving them divine sanction. As the church had counseled the peasants of the Middle Ages to forget the misery of their lives in the contemplation of the hereafter, so Hinduism had for centuries counseled the miserable of India to accept their lot in humble resignation as the best assurance of a better destiny in their next incarnation.

To the Moslems, for whom Islam was a kind of brotherhood of the faithful, that whole system was an anathema. A welcoming faith, Islam's fraternal embrace drew millions of converts to the mosques of India's Mogul rulers. Inevitably, the vast majority of them were Untouchables seeking in the brotherhood of Islam an acceptance that their own faith could offer them only in some distant incarnation.

With the collapse of the Mogul Empire at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a martial Hindu renaissance spread across India, bringing with it a wave of Hindu-Moslem bloodshed. Britain's conquering presence had forced its Pax Britannica over the warring subcontinent, but the distrust and suspicion in which the two communities dwelt remained. The Hindus did not forget that the mass of Moslems were the descendants of Untouchables who had fled Hinduism to escape their misery. Caste Hindus would not touch food in the presence of a Moslem. A Moslem entering a Hindu kitchen would pollute it. The touch of a Moslem's hand could send a Brahman, shrieking, off to purify himself with hours of ritual ablutions.

A great passage contrasting Hinduism and Islam religious tradition.

The India represented by those men and women would be a nation of 275 million Hindus (70 million of them, a population almost twice the size of France, untouchables); 50 million Moslems; seven million Christians; six million Sikhs; 100,000 Parsis; and 24,000 Jews, whose forebears had fled the destruction of Solomon's Temple during the Babylonian exile.

Few of the people in the hall could talk to each other in their native language; their only common tongue was the English of the colonizers, whose rule was about to end. Their nation would harbor fifteen official languages and 845 dialects. The Urdu of the deputies of the Punjab was read from right to left; the Hindi of their neighbors in the United Provinces from left to right. The Tamil of the Madrasis was often read up and down, and other tongues were decoded like the symbols on a Pharaonic frieze. Even their gestures were dissimilar. When a dark-skinned Madrasi from the South nodded his head, he meant "yes." When a pale northerner made the same movement, he meant "no."

An excellent passage describing India succinctly.

India would harbor a leper population the size of Switzerland; as many priests as there were Belgians in Belgium; enough beggars to populate all of Holland; fifteen million sadhus, or holy men; 20 million aborigines, some like the Nagas of Nagaland still hunting human heads. Ten million Indians were essentially nomads, engaged in such hereditary occupations as snake charmers, fortunetellers, jugglers, well-diggers, magicians, tightrope walkers, herb vendors—which kept them constantly moving from village to village. Thirty-eight thousand Indians were born every day, half of them to die before the age of five. Ten million other Indians died each year from malnutrition, undernourishment and diseases like smallpox, eradicated in most parts of the earth.

Their great subcontinent was the most intensely spiritual area in the world, birthplace of one great religion, Buddhism, motherland of Hinduism, deeply influenced by Islam, a land whose gods came in a bewildering array of forms and figures, whose religious practices ranged from yoga and the most intensive meditation the human spirit was capable of, to animal sacrifice and debauched sexual orgies performed in clandestine jungle temples. The pantheon of India's Hindus contained three million deities, a god for every need imaginable because one never knew God, only his manifestation.

There were gods and goddesses for the dance, poetry, song; for death, destruction and disease; goddesses like Markhai Devi, at whose feet goats were sacrificed to check cholera epidemics; and gods like Deva Indra, who was beseeched to give his faithful carnal capacities akin to those displayed on India's great temple friezes. God was held manifest in banyan trees, in India's 136 million monkeys, the heroes of her mythological epics, in the Sacred Cow; worshiped in her snakes, and particularly cobras, whose fangs each year killed 20,000 of the humans who venerated them. India's sects included Zoroastrians, descendants of ancient Persia's fire worshipers, and Jains, a Hindu offshoot whose adherents in that land of the world's lowest life expectancy held all existence so sacred they refused to eat meat, most vegetables, and went about with a gauze mask so that they could not advertently inhale and kill an insect.

India would embrace some of the richest men in the world and 300 million peasants living on the frontiers of existence, dispersed over what might have been one of the earth's richest surfaces and was still one of its poorest. Ninety percent of India's population was illiterate. Her per capita income averaged five cents a day, and a quarter of the people in her two great cities ate, slept, defecated, fornicated, and died in their open streets.

India received an average rainfall of 114 centimeters a year, but her skies unleashed it in an appalling inequality of time and space. Most came in the drenching downpours of the monsoon, and over a third of it ran unused to the sea. Three hundred thousand square kilometers of her land, an area the size of East and West Germany combined, got no rain at all, while other areas got so much water the salt table was almost at the earth's surface, rendering its cultivation extremely difficult. India contained three of the great industrial families of the world, the Birlas, the Tatas and the Dalmias, but her economy was essentially feudal, benefiting a handful of wealthy landowners and capitalists.

Her imperial rulers had made no effort to industrialize her. Her exports were almost exclusively commodities—jute, tea, cotton, tobacco. Most of her machinery had to be imported. India's per capita consumption of electricity was ludicrously low, one two-hundredth of that of the United States. Her soil contained at least a quarter of the world's reserves of iron ore, but her steel production was barely a million tons a year, close to the lowest in the world. She had 6,083 kilometers of coastline and a fishing industry so primitive she wouldn't even offer her population a pound of fish per capita a year.

* #7 - p. 289-291

The legend that surrounded India's princes was the work of a relatively small number of their company, those rulers with the wealth, the time and the appetite to indulge their most imaginative fantasies. A series of consuming passions united those extravagant gentlemen, and they indulged those passions with rare devotion. Hunting, cars, sport, their palaces and harems all figured among them, but most often, jewels were the maharaja's obsession.

The Maharaja of Baroda practically worshiped gold and precious stones. His court tunic was of spun gold, and only one family in his state was allowed to weave its threads. The fingernails of each member of the family were grown to extraordinary length, then cut and notched like the teeth of a comb so they could caress the gold threads into perpendicular perfection.

His collection of historic diamonds included the Star of the South, the seventh-biggest diamond in the world, and the diamond offered by Napoleon III to Empress Eugenie. The most precious baubles in his treasure chest were a collection of tapestries made entirely of pearls into which had been woven ornate designs of rubies and emeralds.

The Maharaja of Bharatpur had an even more remarkable collection. His masterpieces were made of ivory, each representing years of labor for an entire family. Their work demanded an extraordinary exactitude, peeling down the ivory of elephants' tusks. The largest topaz in the world gleamed like a Cyclopean eye from the turban of the Sikh Maharaja of Kapurthala, its apricot brilliance set off by a field of three thousand diamonds and pearls. The fabulous treasure of the Maharaja of Jaipur was buried in a Rajasthan hillside, the site guarded from generation to generation by a particularly bellicose Rajput tribe. Each maharaja was allowed to visit the site once in his lifetime to select the stones which would embellish his reign. Among its marvels was a necklace composed of three tiers of rubies each the size of a pigeon's egg and three enormous emeralds, the largest of which weighed 90 carats.

Centerpiece of the great collection of the Sikh Maharaja of Patiala was a pearl necklace insured by Lloyd's of London for one million dollars. Its most intriguing item, however, was a diamond breastplate, its luminous surface composed of 1,001 brilliantly matched blue-white diamonds. Until the turn of the century it had been the custom of the Maharaja of Patiala to appear once a year before his subjects naked except for his diamond breastplate, his organ in full and glorious erection. His performance was adjudged a kind of temporal manifestation of the Shivaling, the phallic representation of Lord Shiva's organ. As the Maharaja walked about, his subjects gleefully applauded, their cheers acknowledging both the dimensions of the princely organ and the fact that it was supposed to be radiating magic powers to drive evil spirits from the land.

An early Maharaja of Mysore was informed by a Chinese sage that the most efficacious aphrodisiacs in the world were made of crushed diamonds. That unfortunate discovery led to the rapid impoverishment of the state treasury as hundreds of precious stones were ground to dust in the princely mills. The dancing girls whom the resulting potions were meant, in a sense, to benefit were paraded through his state on elephants whose trunks were studded with rubies and whose ears were decorated with elephantine earrings composed of the prince's surviving diamonds.

(A)

The Maharaja of Baroda went about on an elephant even more gaudily arrayed. The animal was a hundred-year-old monster whose great tusks had skewered twenty rivals in as many combats. All his equipment was in gold: the howdah in which the prince rode, his harness, the great saddle cloth, or *shabrack*, covering his back. Like pendants, ten gold chains hung from each of the pachyderm's ears. Each was worth $60,000. Each represented one of his victories.

In both practice and folklore, the elephant had been for generations the princes' preferred means of locomotion. Symbols of the cosmic order, born from the hand of Rama, they were in Hindu mythology the pillars of the universe, the supports of the sky and the clouds. Once a year, Maharaja of Mysore prostrated himself in veneration before the largest bull elephant in his herd, thus rekindling his alliance with nature's forces.

A prince's standing might be measured in the number, the age and the size of the animals filling his elephant stables. Not since Hannibal marched across the Alps had the world seen a collection of elephants to rival those put on display once a year in Mysore for the Hindu festival of the Dasahra. One thousand animals draped in elaborately woven blankets of flowers, their foreheads studded with jewels and gold, paraded through the streets of the city. To the strongest bull elephant went the honor of carrying

This four-page description of the Indian princes and rajahs at the end of the Raj Period - a wonderful source.

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the throne of the maharaja, a pedestal of massive gold draped in gold-brocaded velvet and surmounted by an umbrella, the symbol of princely power. Behind that animal came two more animals decorated in comparable splendor and bearing empty howdahs. As they came into sight, a respectful silence smothered the crowds along their path. Their empty howdahs were supposed to contain the spirits of the maharaja's forebears.

In Baroda, the princes' fetes were inevitably highlighted by elephant fights. Their combats were terrifying spectacles. Two enormous bull elephants driven mad with fury by lances thrust into their flanks like a picador's jab at a fighting bull were unleashed on each other. Shaking the ground with their enormous weight and the sky with their frightened trumpetings, they fought until one of them was killed.

The Raja of Dhenkanal, a state in eastern India, provided thousands of guests each year with an opportunity to witness an equally impressive but less bloody exhibition by his elephants, the public copulation of two of the most select animals from his stables.

A Maharaja of Gwalior decided before the turn of the century to ornament his palace with a chandelier carefully calculated to surpass in dimension the largest chandelier in Buckingham Palace. When he had ordered it in Venice, someone pointed out to the Maharaja that the roof of his palace might not support its weight. He resolved the problem by having his heaviest pachyderm hoisted to the palace roof with a specially constructed crane. When the roof failed to collapse under the animal's weight, the Maharaja announced—correctly, it turned out—that it would support his new chandelier.

The coming of the motorcar inevitably confined the royal elephants to ceremonial, rather than functional tasks. The first automobile imported into India in 1892, a French-made De Dion Bouton, was destined for the garage of the Maharaja of Patiala. Its pride of place was recorded for posterity by the number on its license plate—"O." The Nizam of Hyderabad acquired his automobiles with a technique worthy of his legendary appetite for economy. Whenever his royal eyes fell on an interesting car inside the walls of his capital, he sent word to its owner that his Exalted Highness would be pleased to

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Inevitably, the favored automotive plaything of India's princes was the Rolls-Royce. They imported them in all forms and sizes, limousines, coupés, station wagons and even trucks. The Maharaja of Patiala's tiny Dion was eventually dwarfed in his automotive stables by his mechanical elephants, twenty-seven enormous Rolls-Royces. The most exotic Rolls in India was a silver-plated convertible belonging to the Maharaja of Bharatpur. Rumor had it that mysterious, sexually stimulating waves emanated from its silver frame, and the most gracious gesture the Maharaja could accomplish was to lend it to a princely colleague for his wedding. Bharatpur had also ordered a Rolls-Royce done up in a shooting brake for his hunts. One day in 1921, he took the Prince of Wales and his young A.D.C. Lord Louis Mountbatten out after black buck in it. "The car," the future viceroy of India noted in his diary that night, "went over wild, open country, smashing through holes and over boulders, heaving and rocking like a boat at sea."

The most extraordinary princely vehicle in India, however, was a Lancaster styled to the bizarre design of the Maharaja of Alwar. It was gold-plated inside and out. The chauffer, manipulating a steering wheel in sculptured ivory, reposed on a gold-brocaded cushion. Behind him, the body of the car was a perfectly reproduced replica of the coronation coach of the kings of England. By some mechanical miracle its engine was still able to hurl that weighty vehicle along the road at seventy miles an hour.

With all the revenue, duties and taxes amassed in the states at their disposal, the maharajas of India were uniquely armed to indulge their personal eccentricities.

The passion of the Maharaja of Gwalior, who ruled over one of the best-run states in India, was electric trains. Even in his wildest pre-Christmas fantasies, a young boy could not conjure up an electric-train set to rival the Maharaja's. It was laid out over 250 feet of solid silver rails set on a mammoth iron table at the center of the palace banquet hall. Special tunnels cut in the palace walls prolonged the tracks into the royal kitchen. The Maharaja's guests were placed around the table, and the ruler sat at their head presiding over a mammoth control panel that

bristled with levers, accelerators, switches and alarm signals. They commanded the trains that delivered dinner to the prince's guests. By manipulating his control panel, the prince could pass the vegetables, send the potatoes shuttling through the banquet hall, or order a Red Ball express to the kitchens for a second helping for a hungry guest. He could also with the flick of a switch deprive a guest of his dessert, in which case the dessert trains went speeding past his waiting plate.

One evening, in the midst of a formal banquet in honor of the Viceroy, the prince's control panel short-circuited. While their Excellencies looked on aghast, his electric trains ran amok, racing from one end of the banquet hall to the other, indifferently sloshing gravy, roast beef and a puree of peas on the Maharaja's guests. It was a catastrophe without parallel in the annals of railroading.

Dogs were the peculiar passion of the Nawab of Junagadh, a postage-stamp principality north of Bombay. His favorite pets were assigned to apartments equipped with telephones, electricity and domestic servants, habitations of a style and comfort vastly superior to that of all but a tiny handful of his subjects. They were borne off to marble mausoleums in a canine graveyard to the strains of Chopin's funeral march.

He marked the "wedding" of his favorite bitch, Roshana, to a Labrador named Bobby, with a grandiose ceremony, and he invited every prince, celebrity and dignitary in India, including the Viceroy, to attend. To his chagrin, the Viceroy declined. Still, 150,000 people crowded the route of the nuptial cortege, which was led by the prince's bodyguard and the royal elephants in full regalia. After the parade, the Maharaja offered a lavish banquet in the canine couple's honor before they were led off to their beautifully appointed bridal suite to consummate their union. Those proceedings cost the Maharaja £60,000, a sum which could have financed the basic human needs of 12,000 of his 620,000 impoverished subjects for an entire year.

The palaces of India's great maharajas were monuments that rivaled in size and opulence—although not necessarily taste—the Taj Mahal. Mysore's 600-room palace surpassed the dimensions of Viceroy's House itself. Twenty of those rooms were devoted exclusively to housing the collection of tigers, panthers, elephants and bison killed by three generations of princes in the jungles of the state. At night, with its roofs and windows outlined by thousands of light bulbs, it looked like some monstrous ocean liner decked out for a gala sailing landlocked by error in the middle of India. Nine hundred fifty-three windows, each set in its hand-carved marble frame, covered one façade of Jaipur's marble Palace of the Wind. Udaipur's white-marble palace rose ghostlike from the mists of a shimmering lake.

Having decided during a visit to the Palace of Versailles that he had been Louis XIV in an earlier incarnation, the Maharaja of Kapurthala determined to reproduce the glories of the Sun King in his tiny state. Importing a horde of French architects and decorators, he built himself a scaled-down replica of Versailles at the foot of the Himalayas. He filled it with Sèvres vases, Gobelin tapestries, French antiques, proclaimed French the language of his court, and dressed his turbaned Sikh retainers in the powdered wigs, silk waistcoats, knickers and silver-buckled slippers of the Sun King's courtiers.

The thrones in some of those palaces were the most elaborate and luxurious vehicles ever designed as receptacles for human posteriors. Mysore's was made from a ton of solid gold, reached by nine steps, also of gold, representing the nine steps of the God Vishnu in his ascent to truth. The throne of the ruler of Orissa was an enormous bed. He had bought it from an antique dealer in London and studded it with an appropriate number of jewels. It had a particular charm because it was an exact copy of Queen Victoria's wedding bed.

The throne of the Nawab of Rampur was placed in a hall the size of a cathedral. The columns that surrounded the podium on which it reposed were white-marble representations of nude women. The originality of his throne owed its inspiration to another idea provided by the Sun King. Cut into the rich gold brocade of its cushion was a hole providing direct access to a chamber pot. With an appropriate princely rumble, the ruler was thus able to relieve his royal person without interrupting the flow of the affairs of state.

* #7 - p. 156-162

'We'll see,' I said, and then listened to one of those strange conversations I later found so common as to be the mainstay of American small talk in India: The American on His Bowels. After the usual greetings and pauses these people would report on the vagaries of their digestive tracts. Their passion was graceless and they were as hard to silence as whoopee cushions.

'I had a bad night,' one embassy man said. 'The German ambassador gave a party. Delicious meal – it always is. All kinds of wine, umpteen courses, the works. But, God, I was up at five this morning, sick as a dog. Tummy upset.'

'It's a funny thing,' said another man. 'You have a good meal at some dirty little place and you know you're going to pay for it. I just came back from Madras. I was fine – and I had some pretty risky meals. Then I go to some diplomatic thing and I'm doubled up for days. So there's no telling where you'll get it.'

'Tell Paul about Harris.'

'Harris! Listen,' said the man, 'there was a fella here. Harris. Press Section. Went to the doctor. Guess why? He was constipated. *Constipated!* In *India!* It got around the embassy. People used to see him and laugh like hell.'

'I've been fine lately,' said a junior officer, holding his end up, as it were. 'Knock on wood. I've had some severe – I mean, really bad times. But I figured it out. What I usually do is have yogurt. I drink tons of the stuff. I figure the bacteria in yogurt keeps down the bacteria in lousy food. Kind of an equalizing thing.'

There was another man. He looked pale, but he said he was bearing up. Kind of a bowel thing. Up all night. Cramps. Delhi belly. Food goes right through you. He said, 'I had it in spades. Bacillary. Ever have bacillary? No? It knocked me flat. For six days I couldn't do a thing. Running back and forth, practically living in the john.'

Each time the subject came up, I wanted to take the speaker by his hand-loomed shirt, and, shaking him, say, 'Now listen to me! There is absolutely nothing wrong with your bowels!'

The American digestive problems.

ASIA washes with spirited soapy violence in the morning. The early train takes you past people discovered laundering like felons rehearsing – Pakistanis charging their sodden clothes with sticks, Indians trying to break rocks (this is Mark Twain's definition of a Hindu) by slapping them with wet *dhotis*, grimacing Ceylonese wringing out their *lungis*. In Upper Burma, women squat in conspiratorial groups at bubbly streams, whacking their laundry flat with broad wooden paddles, children totter knee-deep in rock pools, and small-breasted girls, chastely covered by sarongs to their armpits, dump buckets of water over their heads. It was dull and cloudy, starting to mist, as we left Mandalay, and the old man next to me with a neat cloth bundle on his knees watched one of these bathing girls.

Steeping tresses in the tank
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
– Can't I see his dead eye glow
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

Briefly, I thought of leaping from the train, proposing marriage, and throwing my life away on one of these nymphs. But I stayed in my seat.

Theroux through Asia.

* #13 - p. 212

But what it lacked in people was more than made up by the cows. They were everywhere, and the ground underfoot was slippery with their excrement. They were in the forecourts of the temples. They were tethered in the yards of the houses. They were free, lurching up gradients, and floating down the alleys as if they were levitated; or they suddenly loomed up like great, ghostly ships running under a press of sail with the vapour coming from their nostrils in the chill evening air as if it was cannon smoke. They never hesitated. They simply sailed serenely on, and it was for us to get out of the way or be crushed against the walls. They were the chosen animals and they knew it.* They would never die a violent death, only more horribly, of old age, disease or malnutrition.

Holy Cow.

* #11 - p. 220

[Buses are jammed, their proprietors packing them like the ruthless masters of slaving ships. At bus stops young men are disgorged from the windows of these ramshackle stinking monsters like weevils abandoning a tapped biscuit. Others scramble in to replace them. Women and children get little quarter. People wait in a mob on the road, eyeing the middle distance like anxious rugby fullbacks awaiting kick-off. Those who cannot get in cling to the outside and perhaps fall off, or are wiped off by other buses. When buses fall into rivers or canals, as they frequently do, the squirming passengers are too tightly jammed to extricate themselves, and the papers publish pictures showing corpses among the melting ice blocks of the morgue, cheek by jowl in death as they were in life.]

[Safety laws and ideas of danger are bulldozed by the weight of people. Two-wheeled tonga carts, drawn by desperate horses with toast-rack ribs, are piled high with swaying people and lolling babies. Bicycles often carry three. Motor scooters are often seen captained by father, with the eldest son standing in front of him, mother elegantly sidesaddle behind, a daughter clinging to her waist and a baby on her knee. Three pot-bellied men, comical in their gravity, ride by astride a motorcycle. Lorry drivers have three or four companions in the cab and knots of labourers on the back. Cage-carts, drawn by bicycles, are stuffed with little school-children on their way to lessons. If mother, uncle and brother-in-law are not too fat, a car may be able to carry seven or ten. In the cities pedestrians walk in the roads because they are often forced off the pavements by the communities living, sleeping and trading on them.]T

Bus travel and other means of transportation.

They fixed a daily quota of trees to be chopped down. Years before, the region had already been radically changed by the development of the tea gardens. With the arrival of the lumbermen, the wooded jungles shrank. Peasants were compelled to venture ever farther afield to find the necessary wood to cook their food, and new land to cultivate. The number of bushfires increased and, since the vegetation no longer had time to recover before the monsoon cataracts came, erosion ravaged the soil. Deprived of their traditional grazing land, the cattle, too, became part of the destructive process. The growing scarcity of natural products obliged families to increase the growth of crops needed for their own food. As firewood became progressively rarer, they had to use animal dung to cook their meals, thus depriving the land of its richest fertilizer. The yield dropped. Deterioration of the land became more rapid. Because of the deforestation, water was no longer retained, springs ran dry, reservoirs stood empty, the underground water dried up. Since this area was subject to one of the heaviest rainfalls in the world—up to thirty-three feet of water a year in Assam—with each monsoon the arable earth and humus was washed away to the plains, leaving only the bare rock. In a matter of years the whole region had become a desert.

Deforestation of the N.E. region.

60

* #8 - p. 152, 153

The state recognizes fifteen major languages; and there are altogether 1,652 mother tongues, so that every state in the union is multilingual. Even Hindi, the official language, the fifth major language of the world after Chinese, English, Russian and Spanish, is not spoken by the majority in the country. English, the most notable legacy of British management, is the common linguistic currency, but it is spoken by only two or three in every hundred and these people have the lion's share in running the country, the greatest influence in politics, culture, administration, industry and education. Along with religion and caste, land and deprivation, language is one of the ingredients of India which is an abrasive, and over which people fight and die. . . .

Languages

Air travel is in the 1980s, most cars are in the 1950s and the telephone is in the 1930s. Communications in India could be symbolized by a rocket crossed with a cleft stick. In one of the world's industrial giants, possessing atomic power, the generation of electricity is stuck somewhere in the 1920s, in a bog of corruption, overmanning and inefficiency, and industry and commerce are often illuminated by candles.

The agricultural revolution has been a notable achievement: India feeds a population doubled since 1947. But the ordinary man gets no more to eat now than he did then. Half the people live below the poverty line, defined as a monthly expenditure on food of £3.80 per head in the country, and of £4.40 in urban areas. Much more of the land is under the plough, but the destruction of forests is creating the conditions for a crisis. India is being stripped bare. The country has become an industrial giant on a world scale, and the slums have grown apace. The pool of educated has increased and the number of unemployed has increased faster. But public health has improved. Malaria and the great plagues like cholera no longer devastate, and the mitigation of them is a prime factor in the rapid growth of the population.

yoked to
the land as labourers and share croppers and farmers, their existence governed by the rhythms of monsoons and the planting and harvesting of crops, their speed paced to that of oxen. These people are India's constant, her human bedrock, who have, for

thousands of years lived the same lives, worn the same clothes, steered the same ploughs, fought the same feuds, lived in the same dwellings, bowed their heads to the same oppressions and the same jobs. India has been conquered and reconquered, ruled by moghuls, rajahs, Britons and modern politicians, fought over and fought for, while the vast mass of people have endured, almost unchanging, and for the most part uninvolved, unconsidered, unrevolutionary, unschooled, passive and almost mute.

I should have known: Rajasthan is not the kind of state that lets even the most *blase* of visitors go unimpressed. Still, I was not prepared for the forts, the palaces, the lakes, the hills and the deserts that confronted me at every turn. I did not need to be told that Rajasthan was the legendary land of valour and chivalry, of bustling bazaars and cavalcades of colour. I had read history and knew all about Padmini of Chittor and Rana Pratap and his faithful horse, Chetak.

But it is one thing to know and quite another to *feel*. In Rajasthan, for the first time, I *felt* tradition, the presence of history. I knew instinctively that to be in Rajasthan, was to be proud to be an Indian.

Description of Rajasthan.

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* #6 - p. 60

The chicken was a bit rubbery; with the sort of fowls available in India it was easy to see why the inhabitants had invented curry.

While Wanda slept, I sat shivering with my legs drawn up thinking of the undignified altercation I had just had with the taxi-driver who had demanded four times his proper fare – a typical traveller in India, at one moment elevated by the splendour of the country; the next cast down by its miseries.

"Ricksha, Ricksha," we felt like every other well-intentioned but misguided visitor to India who attempts to change the customs of the country for humanitarian reasons and only succeeds in alienating everyone, including the people he is attempting to help. It was obvious that if everyone behaved as we did, twelve thousand men would be thrown out of work and the communications of the city disrupted.

Something rather similar had happened in Delhi before we left for Hardwar where every morning Wanda, being confronted by a hideously emaciated and contorted beggar and unable to stand the sight any more, had gone to a restaurant and bought an enormous meal which she had set down on the pavement before him. From that day forward he was not seen again. She had destroyed him.

The splendor and the miseries.

* #11 - p. 168, 186, 214

He will not kill cows, but he can watch thousands of imprisoned human beings wither before his eyes.

K. F. RUSTAMJI

We spend more time in the pursuit of religion than any other people in the world.

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Let no one be born,
But if one must,
Let no one be a girl.

If you wish to know something about India you must empty your mind of all preconceived notions. Why be imprisoned by the limited vision of the prejudiced? Don't try to compare. India is different and, exasperating as it may seem, would like to remain so ... This is the secret of India, the acceptance of life in all its fullness, the good and the evil.

INDIRA GANDHI

Quotables.

This sage will consult his charts and draw up a horoscopic identity card which will have to be produced by its owner at life's checkpoints: before his ritual toddler's tonsure, before marriage, examinations, journeys, a new job, elections, war, ceremonies, crop sowing, business transactions and other gambles. Indians embrace the universe and their fated imperishable souls move to its mysterious awesome rhythms, out of one life and into the next, sins and atonements inked in heavenly ledgers.

It is simply that India occupies several centuries at once. Here is a country whose scientific and industrial skills, along with the living standards and styles and manners of some of its people, place it firmly in the 20th century. It can be very exciting, for example, to be a young woman – with good looks, a degree, a doting daddy, parental wealth, blue jeans and a wide horizon. But it is also a society where millions of women are oppressed and, like their men, pass their lives in versions of slavery. That five star hotel through whose marble halls the Delhi or Bombay heiress clicks on Gucci heels en route for the disco or the coffee shop for a creamy cake, is built by her exploited sisters who live under sacks, wash in muddy water, and somehow find time to scoop up their babies and fasten them to their breasts. There are multitudes existing in the sort of wretchedness that made Wat Tyler angry. There are some men who live in splendour, some who exist by raiding the food stores of rats.

Astrology straddling a few centuries.
* #2 - p. 1, 8

CASTE PLUS

THE CASTE SYSTEM WAS OUTLAWED IN 1948 BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS A POSITIVE REACTION TO THE ASSASSINATION OF THE CHAMPION OF THE UNTOUCHABLES, (THE HARIJANS)- MAHATMA GANDHI. REGARDLESS, OLD WAYS DIE SLOWLY IF AT ALL. WHEN DISCUSSING THE CASTE SYSTEM, ONE SHOULD CONSIDER DEALING WITH OTHER SYSTEMS OF PREJUDICE EVEN IF LESS INSTITUTIONALIZED, APARTHEID OF SOUTH AFRICA, JAPAN'S DISDAIN OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS OR MIXED CHILDREN FROM AMERICAN AND JAPANESE RELATIONSHIPS. BUT OF COURSE, LET US NOT DISPLACE OR PROJECT, BENSONHURST AND HOWARD BEACH HAMMER HOME TO US HOW MUCH FURTHER WE HAVE TO GO.

THIS SECTION CONTAINS PARAGRAPHS AND QUOTES OF VARYING SIZES - NO MULTI-PAGE PASSAGES. THE CASTE SYSTEM IS JUSTIFIED, DESCRIBED, AND ANALYZED. A SERIES OF QUOTES DEALING WITH CONTACTS BETWEEN CASTES, CARRYING WATER, BIRTH, FUNERAL AND POLLUTION RITUALS CAN BE FOUND HERE.

Those who laid down the rules for Hindu society, settled beyond all doubt the religious, social, and economic standing of every person. It is not for any man to choose what he will be. His birth fixes his station. And nothing that he can do will alter the plan. We who are outside the order are amazed at the contentment of all those within it, until we comprehend its strength and all-pervasiveness. Orthodox members of the order are shocked by the reformer who preaches workers' rights. Orthodoxy rides high in villages, especially in those like ours, dominated by Brahmans.

A succinct description of what the caste system is.

* #16 - p. 38

As we set to develop a new order, should we not first ask ourselves what has been the purpose of the institutions and practices that have been established over the years? How can we retain what is of value in their form while changing the spirit where it retards progress? They are part of the old order that has served and maintained the village for many generations. And we cannot dismiss them lightly. No new order can afford to ignore the strong ties which have bound the different castes together into one village body. When the harvest is plentiful, all prosper together. If the harvest is poor, all suffer together. Each man may not consciously recognize himself as a necessary part of the whole. But he knows his livelihood is dependent on that of his neighbors, just as theirs is dependent on him. They cannot count on outside help. This interdependence has developed a sense of unity worth preserving.

The caste system as a system of interdependence.

71

* #16 - p. 130, 131

Then top this off with religious sanctions and the weight of three thousand years of established civilization, and one has plenty of explanation for Indian society as it is today.

Caste is not "breaking down" today; nor has it been "abolished". Only the debasing practice of untouchability can no longer be publicly enforced, and the government sanctions special privileges (as in higher education and public services) for the "backward" castes, to encourage them in their efforts to advance themselves.

There is no typical Indian, in looks, dress, speech religion, food habits, or occupation—though most Indians live in farming villages, close to the land and to their animals, and in extended, or joint families.

American and Indian societies are poles apart in how they relate an individual to a group.

Quick quips on caste and sanctions.

* #3 - p. 30

Up the Indian net there exists an extraordinary heterogeneity, greater than that of Europe, a tapestry of cultures, tongues, diets, deities and dress. And of colours, too. The physical appearance of

the people presents a vertical spectrum of shades, Aryan milk poured onto Dravidian chocolate, making India darker in the south, lighter in the north, where paleness is prized.

Here is, pre-eminently, the central dynamic of Hinduism, its pervasive religious power and code for living, and the mesh of caste. These forces are inseparable. Caste and religion grind together like gears and their fundamental place and influence in Indian life are not always easy to comprehend.

The framework of caste has existed for more than three thousand years and evolved under the racial, social, occupational and religious pressures of ancient peoples developing their civilization in isolation. For the majority, caste is a watermark, the determining factor in their place in society, providing a matrix of rituals and rules, and in many cases preordaining occupation, political allegiance, choice of bride, dietary habits and social relationships in respect of other castes. There are taboos on mixing and feeding, designed to prevent cross-caste pollution, and a widespread insistence on endogamy, marriage with the caste.

A caste is a complete community, a firm identity, a defence against enemies and difficulties, conferring the benefits of stability and certainty. Caste is so strong that it has seeped into Christian and Muslim communities. A study conducted after a cyclone in 1977 showed that survivors searched first and foremost for their caste-fellows.

The black side of caste is its institutionalizing of prejudice. It has generated a maze of rules and apartheids, plumbing the

But caste is in India's fibre, inextricably bound up with Hindu ideas of life, rebirth and predestination. Its strength and conservative character are features of Indian endurance, an evolved ordering of a complex society that might otherwise be ungovernable; and perhaps a defence against revolution. It survives partly because it adapts. It is strong and accomodating, yew rather than iron.

There are other unifiers in India, like parliament, the courts, the civil service, railways, the airline, All India Radio, newspapers, the cinema and cricket. There is also an idea of India as an entity.

Caste as the fiber, the watermark.

* #2 - p. 5, 6, 7

arises from a religious dichotomy between pure and impure whose implications work themselves out as a complex system of religious and economic relationships embracing, and indeed in large part defining the dimensions of a locality" (1965, pp. 17, 38–39). Jajmani interchange, in this and many other villages, still provides a measure of economic credit and stability; even more, it helps to define the local social order by defining those who can secure ample ritual services.

The barbers in the village have 62 percent of their clientele on a jajmani basis; despite the easy availability of commercial barbering and its lucrativeness for barbers, this jajmani arrangement tends to be maintained because of the ritual importance of the barber.

Arising from the religious dichotomy.

Untouchables constituted a sixth of India's population. Supposedly condemned by their sins in a previous incarnation to a casteless existence, they were readily identifiable by the darkness of their skin, their cringing submissiveness, their ragged dress. Their name expressed the contamination that stained a caste Hindu at the slightest contact with them, a stain that had to be removed by a ritual, purifying bath.

Even their footprints in the soil could defile some Brahman neighborhoods. An Untouchable was obliged to shrink from the path of an oncoming caste Hindu lest his shadow fall across his route and soil him. In some parts of India, Untouchables were allowed to leave their shacks only at night. There they were known as Invisibles.

No Hindu could eat in the presence of an Untouchable, drink water drawn from a well by his hands, use utensils that had been soiled by his touch. Many Hindu temples were closed to them. Their children were not accepted in schools. Even in death they remained pariahs. Untouchables were not allowed to use the common cremation ground. Invariably too poor to buy logs for their own funeral pyres, their dead were usually consumed by vultures rather than by flames.

In some parts of India they were still serfs, bought and sold along with the estates on which they worked, a young Untouchable being generally assigned the same value as an ox. In a century of social progress, they enjoyed only one privilege, which stemmed from their exemption from Hinduism's vegetarian code. Whenever an epidemic struck down a sacred cow, the Untouchable who carted off the rotten carcass was allowed to sell the meat to his fellow outcastes.*

Untouchables and who they are.

* #7 - p. 116

Refusal to change is the armor with which we have learned to protect ourselves. If we and our fathers had accepted the new ideas and customs commended to us, we might have made greater progress. But greater progress would have drawn the eyes of a covetous world toward us. And then our lot would have been worse than before. Where are the cities that flourished for a time? In ruins. While they climbed to great heights and fell to the depths of destruction, we kept to the old reliable level. And we have survived. We are not blind to the advantages of the new, but unless we know just where it will lead us, we prefer to let it pass us by.

Much more important than this is the change which might come from their new way of living and thinking. *Bhangis* might prove troublesome if not kept *bhangis*. They must stay where they have always been, and remain content with the work which is theirs to do. If they want to rise to something better, who then will keep our village clean? Each of us has been born to his appointed task. Perhaps we are what we are because of former lives. We do not know. Everything is in the hands of the gods. But this we do know: The old order has served us well for centuries. It has provided a task for everyone who is born into it. And it has provided for the carrying out of every task needed for village self-sufficiency, by men trained from childhood. If change once begins, how far will it go? What if *bhangis* should try to be farmers, and farmers try to be carpenters, and carpenters try to be teachers? There would be confusion and wrangling, and work badly done. No, the old order with its unalterable allotments is much more satisfactory.

75

To change your role or not to.

* #16 - p. 118, 119

Why do they shun your touch, my friend, and call you unclean
Whom cleanliness follows at every step making the earth and air sweet for our dwelling and ever luring us back from return to the wild?
You help us, like a mother her child, into freshness and uphold the truth, that disgust is never for man.
The holy stream of your ministry carries pollutions away and ever remains pure.
Once Lord Shiva had saved the world from a deluge of poison by taking it himself.
And you save it every day from filth with the same divine sufferance.
Come, friend, come my hero, give us courage to serve man, even while bearing the brand of infamy from him.

A descriptive poem.

* #16 - p. 53

In ordinary life, *bhagats* perform the tasks assigned to the caste groups to which they happen to belong. But they are set apart from ordinary men, because they are imbued with the power of appeasing certain deities. They practice a few austerities, and in moments of ecstasy are able to torture their bodies without consciousness of pain. Their task is to placate offended gods and goddesses and to release the victims of spells cast by capricious spirits. The special ailments of women are regarded as within the scope of their ministrations. The daughter-in-law who has no children seeks the guidance of one of them; their exorcisms are invited when a baby is ill; boils and aching joints are treated by them; when an animal is sick, or a buffalo fails to give milk, the owner sits beside a *bhagat* who is in a trance and relates the trouble. The *bhagat*, acting as medium for the goddess, tells him what penances she demands before the trouble can be alleviated.

A special group of men -·the Bhagats.

* #16 - p. 34

[They accept whatever each day brings, leaving plans and responsibilities for the morrow in the hands of their patrons. When receiving a payment of bread or grain, they go through the formality of complaining mildly. But it would not occur to them to ask for better conditions or freedom. In hot weather they suffer from lack of protection against the heat, and in the winter months they suffer from exposure to the cold. Their clothes are worn, filthy, and tattered, but there is food for the morrow. Jewelry and wedding garments are stored away for the next wedding or fair. Theirs is the cheerfulness that goes with cupboards always almost bare. There will never be abundance, so why struggle? They know that as long as there is grain in the storehouses of their patrons they will not starve. They may go further into debt, but debt is a familiar associate. Only if the patron is ill unto death, or if a series of calamities threatens his storehouse, is there real anxiety]

The patrons and the people - their roles.

* #16 - p. 32

We have learned that it is possible for forty human beings to live on the edge of a village of almost eight hundred, go through the village daily to free it from the most disagreeable of its filth, help in the harvest fields, collect food at the doors of the more prosperous homes, buy spices and oil at the small shops, and regard the village in every way as home, yet never touch nor be touched by anyone belonging to the village.

Before we had time to learn who belonged to what group, we were constantly made aware of the presence of an untouchable by the way in which villagers behaved when one appeared. They shouted threats at any *bhangi* who dared approach while they talked with the Sahib. They were dumbfounded when the Sahib treated the *bhangi* with the same consideration as he did them.

To live outside a village and be really alone.

* #16 - p. 46, 47

In the small town of Pali in central Bihar, the garden of the Government Rest House has been taken over by about sixty families, all *Harijans* or Untouchables. They have created a small village of their own, consisting of mud huts with doors barely two foot six high. Most of the children are naked and the adults wear torn *lungis* or loin-cloths. They have little to do and less to eat. On the many days when there is no agricultural work available, they are reduced to eating snails. French snails may be a delicacy, Indian ones certainly are not.

All the *Harijan* families did have homes of their own and fairly regular work in the village of Akbarpur, about seven miles away. Some years ago, however, the sons of two farmers belonging to the dominant *Bhumihar* caste were murdered in Akbarpur. The *sarpanch* or village headman called in the police and asked them to charge the *Harijans* with murder. The police officer suggested that it would be simpler to burn down the *Harijans'* houses and drive them out of the village. That is how those families came to be squatting on the lawns of the Government Rest House in Pali. Fourteen *Harijans* have been arrested in connection with the murders. No member of the *Bhumihar* caste has been arrested for setting fire to their huts. The trouble all started because the *Harijans* were refusing to work in the *Bhumihars'* fields unless they were paid the minimum wages laid down by the government. The local officials in Bihar do not enforce the Minimum Wages Act because they are in collusion with the dominant farming caste.

At one stage the scandal of the *Harijans* of Akbarpur did reach the ears of the central government in Delhi. After much to-ing and fro-ing of files, the government of Bihar was persuaded to rebuild the *Harijans'* homes and re-settle them in their own village. The Public Works Department took the building materials to Akbarpur and asked the local police station to guard them. Unfortunately the officer in charge of the police station was a member of a farming caste too. As soon as the Public Works officials had left, he withdrew the police guard, and the farmers sold off the building materials. After that, no further attempt was made to resolve the *Harijans'* problem.

A Harijan village plight.

SU

* #15 - p. 60, 61

Fifty years ago, if an Untouchable's shadow fell on a south Indian Brahmin, he would go and bathe six times. Now in an overcrowded bus does anyone verify who is the person who is crushing him? So many people also go to restaurants now. Everybody takes water from the municipal tap. Do people verify which is the hand on the other side of the tap? So I think technology is corroding caste in our lives, but new opportunities are reinforcing caste in our relations with the state. Ultimately it is technology which will prevail.

The times are a-changing.

* #15 - p. 79

It is a cause of concern to the Indian scientific community – which feels itself vulnerable in India – that many of those men who are so daring and original abroad should, when they are lured back to India, collapse into ordinariness and yet remain content, become people who seem unaware of their former worth, and seem to have been brilliant by accident. They have been claimed by the lesser civilization, the lesser idea of *dharma* and self-fulfilment. In a civilization reduced to its forms, they no longer have to strive intellectually to gain spiritual merit in their own eyes; that same merit is now to be had by religious right behaviour, correctness.

The scientist returning to India sheds the individuality he acquired during his time abroad; he regains the security of his caste identity, and the world is once more simplified. There are minute rules, as comforting as bandages; individual perception and judgement, which once called forth his creativity, are relinquished as burdens, and the man is once more a unit in his herd, his science reduced to a skill. The blight of caste is not only untouchability and the consequent deification in India of filth; the blight, in an India that tries to grow, is also the over-all obedience it imposes, its ready-made satisfactions, the diminishing of adventurousness, the pushing away from men of individuality and the possibility of excellence.

And five years ago in Delhi I heard this story. A foreign businessman saw that his untouchable servant was intelligent, and decided to give the young man an education. He did so, and before he left the country he placed the man in a better job. Some years later the businessman returned to India. He found that his untouchable was a latrine-cleaner again. He had been boycotted by his clan for breaking away from them; he was barred from the evening smoking group. There was no other group he could join, no woman he could marry. His solitariness was insupportable, and he had returned to his duty, his *dharma*; he had learned to obey.

A modern man. a scientist was a caste identity.

* #10 - p. 170, 171, 172

82

In each person's dealings with his neighbors of other jatis, their rank relative to his prohibits some kinds of interchange and sets limits on others.

Seating arrangements are more than polite distributions in space, they symbolize authority arrangements and power relations. The

The traditional explanation is that people of higher jatis are less defiled and keep themselves more pure for purposes of religious ritual than are those of lower jatis. The lowest jatis are the most polluted and least able to have close relations with the higher gods and the higher jatis. Both pollution and purity are linked to a person's biological and physical acts; they are especially related to the bodily processes of men and animals.

The sweeper woman goes about the village freely and visits different homes. She can be a prime carrier of gossip, a center of human interest, and she sometimes is a source of lively amusement.

generally freer conduct outside the village, as at markets or fairs, is also of long standing.

Thus in wrestling matches between village teams in Mysore, young men of all jatis, except the very lowest, may lock arms in competition (Beals 1964, p. 107). The dramatic troupes that tour villages in western U.P. can include actors of different jatis.

Work in the fields, for example, is far less involved with ritual avoidances than is work in the kitchen. During the bustle of the harvest, people of widely different jati rank may work side by side and may come in physical contact in ways that are tabooed in the houses and streets of the village.

Those in the highest ranks are usually quite rigorous about avoiding close contacts with those of the lowest; they insist that the lowest groups use separate water sources, separate residential areas, and various other means of ensuring physical as well as social distance between the lowest and the highest jatis.

Three pages of snippets that cover visiting homes, carrying water, where one can sit, saliva touching, touching a dead body and body excretion.

* #5 - p. 183, 182, 180

But virtually all villagers, rich and poor, high and low, lackadaisical as well as orthodox, observe some such biologically-induced and ritually required purification.

Funeral rites are directed toward restoring all those who have been so imperiled and disabled to a condition of relative purity, of social safety and normality.

mother and child must remain in seclusion for a specified period, have the proper ritual acts performed for them and undergo purificatory rites to mark the end of the seclusion period. Thus purified, the mother may resume normal relations within her family and village; the child can emerge into society as he has into the world.

Faeces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, spittle, and parings of nail and hair are all ritually impure" (Srinivas 1952a, p. 104; see also Mathur 1964, pp. 103–105). These are not all charged with equal pollution potential. After touching one's own saliva, only a wash of the hands is necessary; at menstruation a woman must undergo much more prolonged purification.

There is, however, a vast difference between the two main kinds of pollution. One kind is temporary and personal pollution, to which every mortal is subject daily. The other kind is that permanent and corporate pollution ascribed to all in a jati, which is a main criterion in sorting out the social order (cf. Kane 1941, pp. 165–179).

The sources of pollution are many; the most potent of them are contacts with death and with bodily emissions such as blood and excreta. Every person is impaired by these defilements both regularly and sporadically. When a person defecates or urinates, he is thereby unclean.

Food and water are susceptible to ritual pollution and so each villager must take care about the purity of what he eats and drinks. What he eats must be an accepted part of his jati's diet and cuisine. From whom he will take food and with whom he will eat express his jati's status relative to that of cooks or fellow diners.

Purity is not merely ceremonial purity, an Indian scholar has written, it is the principle of "the varying degrees of dominance of the soul over the senses,

The left hand should not touch food because it is used for cleaning after a call of nature" (Fuchs 1950, p. 370). The left hand can be used to handle one's food, but it should not touch the lips.

Whenever any villager prepares for formal worship, he must make himself properly pure for approach to the supernatural. He abstains from polluting personal acts, he avoids contact with defiling persons and objects, he bathes and performs other preliminary acts. Even those of the lowest jatis, whose touch can temporarily disqualify others from entering the precincts of the high gods, are also careful to be in a fit state before entering their own sacred places.

Bodily excretion imposes a daily cycle; other biological facts—of sex, of menstruation, of cutaneous growth, of birth, of death—entail recurrent disability and require periodic restitution.

* #5 - p. 196, 187, 186

Alcohol is a special vector of pollution. The drinking of strong liquor is abhorrent in the Brahmin tradition, perhaps because a drunk man is apt to forget ritual precautions, to touch what should not be touched, to take in what should be kept out, and to trespass where he should not go. In other jatis, especially of the Kshatriya category, there is a more easy-going tolerance of liquor. People of lower jatis are more likely to drink liquor and may even make alcoholic libations to their deities. Those whose jati occupation is the making of liquor are thereby of low rank. Alcohol is thus doubly loaded against a man of higher jati, being defiling in itself and having been handled by polluting people (Mandelbaum 1965, pp. 283-284).

Abstinence from sex is prescribed before important ceremonies or before any approach to deities (cf. Srinivas 1952a, p. 103). Marital intercourse does not bring on a high degree of ritual pollution, but leaves a person in a bodily state that must nevertheless be purified. Intercourse between a man and a woman of different jatis, however, can have great social consequences. A man does not usually suffer great loss nor must he make ritual recompense if it becomes known that he has had an affair with a woman of a jati not very different in status from his own. His wife and relations may make him smart, but his jati fellows usually do not consider that they all have been defiled by his dereliction (cf. Dube 1955b, p. 144). Such jati taint is felt, however, if it becomes publicly known that a man of highest jati has consorted with a woman of the lowest. If a woman of high jati rank is discovered in sexual connection with a man of low jati, she may be cast out forever from her family, her jati, and her village.

Other pollution rituals involving alcohol and sex.

* #5 - p. 201

. . . They are pure of themselves and not by compulsion. Before every meal they must have a wash . . . before they have finished ablutions they do not come into contact with each other; they always wash after urinating" (Watters 1904, p. 152).

. . . very few Indian villages are models of hygiene and villagers are no more hygienically clean than are rural folk in impoverished circumstances anywhere. But the ritual wash is part of villagers' daily routine. . . .

. . . The washing must be done in a proper formal manner and must be accompanied by ritual acts of speech and gesture. Other agents of purification are also used; fire, sun, and Ganges water are among the most potent (Mathur 1964, pp. 100–103). Most commonly used for purification are the products of the living cow. Cow dung, usually mixed with water, is applied as a general means of ritual cleansing and prophylaxis. The housewife cleans her kitchen regularly, using that mixture. With it the priest purifies the places where he performs his rites. Such use of cow dung entails the respect-pollution which we have noted above. As Harper puts it, "The cow's most impure part is sufficiently pure relative to even a Brahmin priest to remove the latter's impurities" (1964, p. 183). The most potent personal purification of all is the ingestion of a mixture containing five products of the cow, namely milk, curds, ghee, dung, and urine.

The ritual wash.

LEADERSHIP ROLES

THIS BRIEF SECTION IS AN EXTENSION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM DISCUSSION. LEADERSHIP ROLES EMANATE FROM THE LAND, ITS OWNERSHIP, FROM YOUR SEX, AND FROM YOUR CASTE. MANY OF THESE BRIEF PASSAGES OFFER THE TEACHER QUOTES TO USE AS LESSON OPENERS, REINFORCEMENTS, OR CLOSING STATEMENTS.

Local power flows mainly from the land. Land is the prime good in this agrarian setting; land is the main source of wealth; land is a main need for a jati on the rise. "Of all village values, the most important and permanent is not money but land."

In a family, the senior man is expected to see to it that family quarrels do not get out of hand, that family members behave properly, that the family gives the appearance of a reasonably harmonious household. Among the senior men in a lineage, there is commonly at least one who tries to keep the whole lineage on an even keel, who attempts to calm stormy encounters and is alert to signs of impending trouble."

Yet another function expected of a leader or elder is to act as a link between his group and larger social echelons. Thus the more influential men speak for their lineage in a jati-group council.

* #5 - p. 204, 271

Among groups at the top of the social scale, a woman at marriage enters a permanent inviolable relationship that must endure through all the here and the hereafter. Widows must never remarry; divorce is prohibited. No such taboos lie upon women of the lower jatis, who may divorce and be divorced and who may remarry whether they are divorcees or widows.

Each person is born into a jati, into one and only one jati. He and all the others in his jati are considered by their neighbors to have certain attributes, commonly including a traditional occupation. These attributes affect the permanent pollution or purity of the jati members and therefore affect the kinds of relations they may have with people of other jatis, who carry greater or less permanent pollution-purity than their own.

Brahmins and other high jatis are purer in their diet than are the lowest—who may not be able to forego the occasional dietary windfall of a carcass. The highest jatis tend, on the whole, to be more fastidious ritually than are the lowest—who may not be able to afford, or may not know about, all the ritual niceties.

Purity and pollution, wealth and power are major considerations.

* #5 - p. 230, 223, 222, 221

lows. The causes of quarrels are said to be *Zamin*, *Zar*, *Zanani*—land, wealth, and women. Many fights do indeed spring from these sources of friction.

Land is the one main productive resource, scarce and costly. The possession of land gives independence and openings to power. Possession of land is schemed for, contrived, wangled, and disputed. Other kinds of wealth, like cattle or houses, are also sensitive matters, so that even a slight, perhaps an unintentional, infringement on a man's herd or house is likely to raise his hackles. Women are considered to be both submissive to and more highly sexed than men; the men, especially among the dominant jatis of the North, are supposed to be both personally venturesome and puritanically zealous of their women's honor. So Zanani really is a fertile source of trouble among men and alliances.

A village family of wealth and power generally likes to have at least one son educated enough to deal with the officials and their papers.

But in the context of most village struggles, violence is a stark fact of life that is partly controlled, partly exploited, partly manipulated, but always a potential factor with which a responsible man must reckon.

The makeup of an alliance is visible when the men come in from the fields. In villages of the north, they cluster in small groups to share a hookah. The smokers who congregate in the same men's house or sitting platform are apt to be of one alliance. In South India, the allies gather on the verandah of a big house or under a special tree, talking, resting, looking, playing cards, passing their leisure time together. They are partners in recreation as in council, in the banter of the evening as well as in the heat of a quarrel. Their women too are close to each other but women's interchange is more limited and less visible publicly than that of the men.

* #5 - p. 253, 247, 243

Further, a leader commonly has to have the time and the interest to keep himself closely posted on what goes on among his jati fellows.

Unless a man has wealth enough to afford the leisure for this kind of participation, his interest in doing so will not avail.

Similarly, wealth is necessary but is not in itself sufficient. To be an effective leader, a man must use his wealth properly in extending hospitality, in entertaining many visitors, and, as we have noted above, in staging generous family and jati rites.

Because an effective leader must communicate effectively, fluency and cogency in public speech are great assets. In addition, the rising leader of a jati should demonstrate that he intends to use these assets for the general good before he is regularly, widely, and spontaneously invited to help maintain the whole jati.

.....One means of purification described in Sanskrit scripture, is the ingestion of *panchgavya*, a mixture of the five products of the cow. milk, curds, ghee, cow dung, and cow urine.

The final phase of readmission is a feast, given at the offender's expense, in which the former outcaste eats with his jati fellows, especially with those who hold hereditary offices. In this way they demonstrate that his sin has been properly

A child learns quite early to discriminate between his jati fellows and those of other jatis. He absorbs the self-image of his jati in countless ways. A Rajput boy learns about the martial style and regal tradition of his group by the bearing of his elders, by their contemptuous references to lesser breeds, by the tales, proverbs, and ballads he hears frequently.

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* #5 - p. 272, 301, 321, 322

WOMEN IN INDIA

"YES, I DO WHAT MY MOTHER DID. BUT I HAVE BEGUN TO WONDER IF THAT IS ALL THERE IS TO LIFE." THE TIMES ARE A-CHANGING AS THE PARAPHRASED SONG LINE STATES. WOMEN IN INDIA ARE NO LONGER SECOND CLASS CITIZENS - WELL NOT QUITE EQUAL EITHER. LIKE THE CASTE SYSTEM, THE PATRILINEAL TRADITION SYSTEM IS BEING MODIFIED, CHANGED IN SMALL INCREMENTS. WITH THE URBAN EDUCATED FAMILIES OF INDIA WE SEE OUR YUPPIE EQUIVALENTS BUT EVEN IN THESE LIBERATED BASTIONS, DOWRY DEATHS ARE ALL TOO COMMON IN DELHI AND OTHER URBAN AREAS. AND YOUNG WOMEN ARE SUBJECTED TO PUBLIC PINCHING, RAPE, AND OTHER INVASIONS OF THEIR PRIVACY, AND BEING MORE SO THAN IN THE WEST. POWERLESS, NO; UNITED, UNFORTUNATELY NOT; BUT THERE IS HOPE.

Another common error in considering Indian society is to pity its women, who sometimes appear subordinate to men and even repressed. In fact, in legends, in philosophical literature, in family life, and in modern Indian society the female is of central importance.

India is not a society invested with an uncompromising patrilineal tradition, as in the West, but the only major cultural area which tolerates a balance of patrilineal and matrilineal societal features. Some powerful divinities are female; the energizing principle in Hindu philosophy is Shakti, with female anthropomorphic aspects; some Indian communities are matrilineal, and matrilineal vestiges adhere to the customs of other communities; the central figure of Mother in family, in imaginary literature, and in psychological attitudes, particularly among men, makes women's liberation somewhat superfluous movement among middle class Indian women.

Of course, for women without education, social position, and struggling to keep their families fed and clothed—that is, for most Indian women—"liberation" is a mockery, as it would have been also to Western women before the modern period of individualism and economic independence for separate members of the family. But some Indian women, who have education, who take advantage of contemporary legislation affecting marriage and family (Special Marriage Act of 1954 and Hindu Marriage Act of 1956), and who may be partially self-supporting, are probably better placed than Western women of similar backgrounds. Their respected status in society—as doctor, receptionist, or prime minister—is not "newly won," but rather newly recovered.

Don't pity the women of India.

* #3 - p. 41 96

new Hindu Code, as it was called. It was a major milestone in the march towards equality, giving women an equal share of family property and protecting their rights in marriage and divorce. Of course, altering the law does not by itself alter social attitudes and practice. But according to Tara Ali Baig, one of India's most prominent social workers, the spread of female education has led to important changes.

> Families themselves never thought it was necessary to educate girls, because they said the girl has to go to another family and must therefore learn everything at home about how to care for others, so that she is an honour to her family when she gets married. They thought that household care, helping the mother and looking after the baby sister or brother, was much more important than education. But that has changed dramatically; and one of the indicators of this is a phenomenon you get in the dailies – especially the English dailies in big cities like Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay – the matrimonial page. In the old days, the matrimonial page used to say that they wanted a girl who was skilled in Household Arts; there were nice, little abbreviations, H.A. and that sort of thing. Now, if you go systematically down these pages, in almost all of them it's a question of wanting a highly educated girl. That is an indicator, if there ever was, of the change that has taken place.

Female education is bringing change.

* #15 - p. 89

> I'm very proud to say that women, in the last ten years, have been slowly coming together. On this whole issue of rape, they have come together in different parts of the country and been able to bring amendments in the law on rape. In the case of dowry murders also, they have come together and been able to change the law. Then education – for the first time, when the Government was deciding a new policy for education, it has been made mandatory to bring in equality of women as one of the themes in education.

Ela Bhatt cites the current emphasis on women's development in government plans, with a separate ministry set up for this purpose, as evidence of change. Against these successes, she says, a major and continuing weakness of the women's movement is that it remains largely the preserve of urban and educated women and has yet to reach poorer, rural women. 'We do lack a common vision of the future,' she concedes, 'and because of that, we are not able to come to a common strategy. And if you don't have a commonly thought out strategy, you can't be successful.'

Liberation is for the urban educated.

It was introduced partly to protect Hindu women from the attentions of Muslim conquerers, and partly in imitation of the harems of Muslim rulers. But while Hindu women have traditionally had more personal freedom than their Muslim counterparts, they have suffered serious discrimination in matrimonial and family law since the earliest period of Aryan settlement of the sub-continent. Male supremacy was enshrined in the *Vedas*, the ancient Hindu scriptures; but it was superimposed upon pre-Aryan civilisations, dating back to 5000 BC, which had a strongly matriarchal bias and celebrated the cult of the Mother-Goddess. The result was a peculiarly Indian compromise, in which women could be both goddesses and slaves, matriarchs and chattels.

The colonial rulers, in alliance with enlightened Hindu reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy,[1] had initiated this process in the mid-nineteenth century with legislation to abolish *sati*[1] and female infanticide and to permit the re-marriage of widows.

In the civil disobedience campaigns that followed, thousands of women, educated and illiterate, affluent and working-class, put aside their domestic preoccupations to march in Congress demonstrations, face police batons and court imprisonment. There are Indian women activists today who feel that the optimism of those nationalist years has not been fulfilled by independence. Among them is Ela Bhatt, a

For the vast majority of Indian women, the problem is not one of legal equality, but of achieving the educational skills, self-confidence and economic muscle to implement the equal rights enshrined in India's statute books.

Sati and the past.

* #15 - p. 87, 88

ubiquitous bottom-pinching that goes on in overcrowded Delhi buses. 'It's one of those strange cities,' says Kalpana Mehta, 'where every time a woman boards a bus, she is prepared to be pinched, to be touched unnecessarily, to have people fall all over her. And she has to be prepared to retaliate or to bear it in silence.'

There is a treatment of women, especially if they are young, unmarried and unattached; something happens to the male on the road, and he really does not behave as a gentleman. There are degrees of this – you could call it violence, disregard, disrespect – which go a long way, and I think our students have felt this.

dowry-death, when a husband or his family burns a newly married woman because she has not brought enough money with her. The murders are often disguised as kitchen accidents; and here again, says Kalpana Mehta of *Saheli*, the police are invariably slow, and often reluctant, to investigate.

I've found I would say 33 or 39 per cent, women are the sole supporters of the family.

Male mistreatment of women.

* #15 - p. 92, 93

are still widely regarded as goods and chattels, a view reinforced by the fact that dowry, although illegal, is still regularly demanded by the bridegroom's family.

we do not have any real, institutional arrangements for young people to meet together, so there is no situation really where they can meet people casually, without any intention of marriage. If you meet a person only with the intention of marriage, you have to say either yes or no immediately; and that's very tough.

England,' he says, 'you fall in love before marriage and out after it. In India, we fall in love after marriage and stay in love.'

When women have just been raped, they are very full of anger, and they are willing to fight back and see to it that people are punished. What is very important here is the kind of delay which takes place – three, four, five years – after the rape has occurred.

There was a saying in the ancient *Upanishads*[1]: 'Lord, here grant a boy; grant a girl elsewhere'. If a boy was born, there was tremendous celebration, and sweets were distributed. But if a girl was born, there was lamentation in the house, and everyone would come and tell the poor woman: 'Perhaps next time you'll have a boy'. That still persists; the concept of a boy being more important than a girl has not vanished. A very modern change that's taken place, and one that's been very alarming to all of us in the welfare field, is that, with the development of amniocentesis, there are doctors in certain small towns who are advertising that they can determine the sex of an unborn child. And those families then have abortions so it's a modern version of female infanticide that's taking place.

Fall in love after marriage....you're goods and chattel.

* #15 - p. 90, 91

He said: 'She was the daughter of a man I had to see. I don't know about you, but the first time I came to India I more or less ignored Indian girls. Yes, I found them pretty, but the funny thing about a woman's beauty is that if you're absolutely sure you can't go to bed with her you begin to notice something calculated in her prettiness. I mean, her beauty is completely ineffectual. So she looks plainer, and gets uninteresting until she's invisible. If she has a good figure you see her as sinister rather than just plain, waiting for you to make a move that'll land you in jail. You can really develop a hate for these Indian women with their good looks and their useless virtue. That's why I prefer Muslim countries. They cover up their women and they don't make any bones about it. No one would be silly enough to tamper with a woman wearing one of those veils. It's unthinkable. I mean, they don't even look like women – they look like furniture covered up to keep the dust off. Veils are supposed to be sexy. Veils aren't sexy – what's sexy about something four feet high with a sheet over it?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

* #13 - p. 190

As a cure for impotence the clinics recommend a period during which men should avoid thinking of sex, and have a course of alternative hot and cold baths, followed by herbal medicines to enrich and thicken semen, enhanced by doses of calcium, tin and crushed pearls. To improve tumescence arsenic, saffron and musk are recommended, as well as applications of lion and bear fat, castor oil and carbolic acid. Cantharides, mustard and oil of cloves are also prescribed; and a diet including eggs and the testicles of a goat is favoured; while tea and tobacco are frowned on.

The wet sari, as seen clinging to film actresses, has in recent years come to represent an erotic ideal. In hundreds of films the director contrives ways of leading both the heroine and the bad girl to water. They fall in rivers and the sea. They get caught in the rain and sprayed by gardeners' hoses. They have large liquid eyes, bruised roses for mouths, slightly sulky, and there they stand with their garments clinging. The cinema in India is a sexual frontier, gradually encroaching on conservatism, and is partly devoted to stimulating and gratifying fantasies in a sexually unpermissive society. The giant film hoardings are remarkable, an industry and art form of their own, a colourful part of the city street scene, promising hours of thrusting bosoms, wet saris and gunfire for a few rupees. In blasé Bombay, and Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, the strictly limited eroticism of the cinema has become accepted, although there are always newspaper controversies over films that have supposedly gone too far. But in the villages many find them too strong, and men forbid women to go to the travelling cinemas.

A kiss is rarely seen in an Indian film, being too daring, and too offensive, in a society where such physical pleasures are enjoyed in private.

Indian girls are modest and many actresses would not only refuse to kiss in a film but would be outraged if asked to do a nude scene. Even partial nudity is rare. The camera usually stops short at a bare back or a generous thigh. Western films are heavily cut. Bosoms heave, but are not bared.

Indian girls who go to the beach or to a pool dress very modestly, hardly ever in a bikini. Women swim in saris on Goan beaches, or wear pantaloons or long skirts, like Victorian belles. They perform their daily ablutions in saris and, in the twinkling of an eye, change into a dry one. They usually remain partly covered when taking ritual baths, as they do in the sea at Puri, in the lake at Pushkar, and in the numerous bathing places along the Ganges.

Modesty as a virtue on and off the screen.

* #2 - p. 37, 38, 39

daughters customarily leave their natal family on marriage. A bride goes to live where her husband lives (which is with his father) and does not share in her own father's and brothers' property. Women, especially as mothers, uphold the ideal at least as vigorously as men do.

It is a motif that holds constant interest; villagers hear it told over and again in tales from the *Mahabharata* and other classical sources. It is celebrated in popular song and is a common background of village gossip.

Women, whether in the status of daughter, wife, or widow, are entitled to maintenance by their male kin, but under the ancient law they had no other vested rights in the family property.

Though post-independence legislation has changed the inheritance laws, there is still a strong inclination among villagers, men and women alike, to follow the ancient mode of property rights and inheritance.

Each son is expected to bring his wife into his natal household. All eat from the same kitchen, live in the same house or compound, and share income. The males pool all property, support each other closely in the village and advance each other's cause in the world—and even into the afterworld.

Cohesion and cooperation are not completely severed when a family splits into smaller households.

In the joint family there is immediate aid to tide a member over illness; there is the increased efficiency of pooled labor and the economies of a single kitchen and household; and there is greater strength to ward off encroachments from others. Domestic rites and celebrations can be staged more elegantly by a large family, and the resulting prestige enhances all within the family.

Rules and rights for women within the marriage.

Her greatest responsibility is to bear a child, preferably a son. Barrenness is a fear, a curse, an unending reproach.

During this period of stringent responsibility, a young wife is also more isolated than ever before or again. Her mother-in-law is supposed to be more of a disciplinarian than a comforter. The other women in the household are not allies. The male elders must keep their distance; the husband's younger brother, who is eligible to be her friend, may not yet have established really easy relations with her. And her husband, her life's mainstay and the whole reason for her presence in the house, cannot appear to take an interest in her. She, in turn, should not show special interest in him though all know that she must perforce pin her hopes and fasten her thoughts on him alone. She does not address him directly and never uses his name.

One feature that is consistent across jatis and regions is the great concern of the husband's family about the conduct of the young wife. Should she deviate from the prescribed obedient, complaisant conduct, the corrective forces are, as it were, already poised, and the family elders are quick to bring redressive pressures.

The women of the family are not expected to get along well. As a Kannada proverb puts it, a thousand moustaches can live together, but not four breasts. The hostility between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is both proverbial and a frequently observed fact.

The young wife as baby maker and....

* #5 - p. 86, 87, 90, 91

As the old adage goes : 'If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman you educate a whole family'.

A great quote to open a lesson with.

* #5 - p. 102

When the men are at sea for days, the women keep their business going. When the men return with the catch of fish, the women clean it and market it. 'My wife is my finance minister,' says one fisherman. 'She not only runs my business but also me and the house

Sixty years have not in many ways changed the way a woman lives in the back towns of the country. But they have changed the manner in which the women have begun to perceive themselves and their surrounds. The cocoon that sheltered and protected a grandmother who knew her basic functions and fulfilled them—transforming herself from within and not always from without—can no longer contain the younger woman.

So it seemed when I meet Bollamma, a woman of 70, limping down a walk lined with coffee blossoms. 'A broken leg does not stop me from work,' she says, her face lit like a child's. 'I may have a grey head but I have green shoulders.'

'Democracy, urbanization, travel and mobility have changed the family structure of Goa,' says a nun who runs a convent for women. 'The young have been robbed of their moorings.

'Families in our society have been like temples. The temples though have begun to crumble,' says the manager of the old age home as if he has read my question. 'We do not want to face the fact that our family ties are breaking. It is loyalty in a family that makes the glory of a home. Those homes no longer exist. Houses do, like monuments.'

Families are like temples.

* #5 - p. 52, 53

What is his ideal of a family?

'One in which a man lives a life of *dharma*, a woman is a good housekeeper and the children are pious,' he propounds. 'The first son is *dharmaputra*, the one who keeps the family line. The rest are born out of lust. It is essential to have a daughter in the family. It is she who perpetuates it. If there is no son, a daughter has the right to perform the last rites of the parents.'

Who is more important of the two?

'In a train, is the guard more important than the driver?' asks the learned man.

Do the *shastras* endorse a planned family?

The farmer has changed his wheels but not the culture of his mind. He is willing to learn about tractors and pumps, fertilizers and cross-bred cows. These are good for his land, his harvest, his well-being. Does he connect these with the well-being of his family? Not directly. If his milching cow or his prized bull is ill, he will rush the animal to a veterinarian. But not his child who may be a victim of chronic diarrhoea.

'A man can breed children. But if his bull dies he loses his livelihood

The bull is Narayanappa's companion. He brings him home in the dead of night. The bull is more than a wife, who he only sees at certain hours. His wife, to him is a mere tool, necessary to keep a unit complete, and further a generation. He has no room for her. She finds room for herself in her motherhood.

'Yes, I do what my mother did. But I have begun to wonder if that is all there is to life

Men and women lived in a cocoon guided and strengthened by rituals that were never questioned. Today there are so many formulas for happiness. A woman needs to know more before she chooses one. When I went back to Madurai I asked my mother why she did not send me to college and make me an engineer? To find a bridegroom as educated would have been a costly affair, she told me. To be married then was the only ideal.

Miscellaneous snippets.

- 96 - * #5 - p. 35, 48, 49

His pots, carved with fish, parrot and mango leaf, are part of every Indian home. They augur prosperity, fertility, a happy home. The potter's house is a hut of mud, stained by the sun, weakened by the rain.

'Women derive status from their husbands and power from their sons' is an old saying no longer relevant in Attani Markulam, a village with squares of green, circled by sentinel-like grey hills.

Trees are an abode of female deities. In them rests a divinity worthy of worship.

. Women are circled in song around an old banyan tree whose roots hang above their heads like the blessings of an elder seer. As summer descends, women gather around the tree, clean it, paint its trunk with white chalk, and tie a red thread around it. That's the way a banyan is worshipped, a tree revered through time. It is the seed of the banyan that contains the nature of creation, says an old Hindu parable.

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. Reflecting on the Hindu marriage he writes: 'Husband and wife alike have parts to play; and it is from this point of view that we can best understand the meaning of Manu's law, that a wife should look on her husband as a god, regardless of his merits or demerits—it would be beneath her dignity to deviate from a women's norm merely because of the failure of a man. It is for her own sake and for the sake of the community, rather than for his alone, that life must be attuned to the eternal unity of Purusha and Prakriti.*

Why does your face lack the serenity your mother's has? a friend once asked. My mother, I told him, has lived without a name. She has been a daughter, a wife, a mother, an aunt, a grandmother but rarely herself. She has lived a long life without ever being alone. She has never gone shopping for herself and never met people outside her frame of activity. Her sensibilities have never stirred out of a space that has not been her own.

I have to meet the challenge of the outside world and still retain the purity, the integrity and the inner strength of my mother.'

Centuries ago, a king, while travelling through his domain came across people living in dark caves. He was horrified at the gloom and ordered every family to be given lamps and oil to fuel them. Fifty years later, he visited the area again and found the caves in darkness. The lamps had been forgotten or were broken. The oil had run out. The king ordered more oil, new lamps. But when he returned to the area the following year the caves were dark once more. The king summoned his minister, a wise old man, and asked for an explanation. 'Ah,' said the minister, 'You gave the lamps to the men. You should have given them to the women.'

The king followed his minister's advice and the lamps have kept burning ever since!

* #5 - p. 119-121

'Soil, water and vegetation are a gift of the forest. Soil, water and vegetation are a basis of life.' She knows this not because it is ecology but because it springs from her experience and her daily struggle. Her's and other women's non-violent resistance to save 'their trees' by hugging them is today hailed as the Chipko movement, a revolutionary weapon in the name of conservation.'

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* #5 - p. 107, 108

ROLE PLAYING IN SOCIETY

INDIAN SOCIETY HAS CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES FOR MEN AND WOMEN TO PLAY; THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THE RURAL VILLAGES. AND, INDIA STILL BEING A NATION OF 500,000 PLUS VILLAGES, ONE CAN SEE THE VALIDITY/FACTUAL BASIS OF THESE QUOTES. IN THE CITIES, THE ROLE DELINEATIONS TEND TO BLUR ESPECIALLY AMONG THE EDUCATED MIDDLE TO UPPER MIDDLE CLASS. THIS HAS LED, I BELIEVE, TO ROLE CONFLICTS WHICH I SAW IN THE HEADLINES OF THE CITY PAPERS - DOWRY DEATH, ETC.

The people of each endogamous group follow certain characteristic patterns of behavior and have certain assigned attributes—among them a specialized occupation—according to which the group is ranked in the local hierarchy. The criteria for ranking have to do, village respondents declare, with the ritual pollution and purity that are inherent in the group's practices. These ritual criteria are usually mentioned first. More closely questioned on this matter, a villager is likely to allow that considerations of power and wealth also enter into the ranking.

Most villagers, however, assume that there should be a ranked hierarchy of groups, even though they may disagree about the particulars of the ranking. They also agree that members of their own group must keep themselves separate from those of other, especially lower, groups, not only in marriage but also in domestic intimacies such as eating together, and must observe a host of other prescribed distances.

A jati is an endogamous, hereditary social group that has a name and a combination of attributes. All members of a jati are expected to act according to their jati attributes, and each member shares his jati's status in the social hierarchy of a village locality in India.

Definitions of group behavior.

Every person is thus a member of his village and of his jati. The village, or a set of neighboring villages, forms a localized community of specialized, interdependent groups. The members of a jati, in their respective villages, form a set of actual or potential kin.

He may deal with others daily, but his closest links, those of marriage and kinship, are only with his jati fellows. His life and aspirations are intertwined with theirs.

All of a person's kin by descent and marriage, both actual and potential, are within his jati; none are outside it. The boundaries of his jati are continually revalidated through marriage; his closest interactions are typically with his kinsmen.

The common ideal is that of filial and fraternal solidarity, which prescribes that brothers should remain together in the parental household after they marry, sharing equally in one purse and in common property, helping each other according to need and each giving according to his best abilities. Brothers should not only cleave to one another, but, even more important, they should remain with their parents and be steadfast to them. This ideal has strongest sway while the father is alive and influential, and fades after both parents are dead and the brothers' children marry (cf. Gore 1965, pp. 211-213).

Membership in a village, jati, and linkage through marriage.

* #5 - p. 15, 33

Respect entails obedience and the avoidance of any behavior that might indicate a contrary will or wayward desires not under firm parental control. In the ideal depictions, a son devotes himself completely to the welfare as well as to the will of his parents.

Parents also owe a certain respect to their children; they should not behave in ways that make it difficult for their children to respect them.

After the son's marriage he may be given some economic responsibilities but while his father is alive and while the son is in the same village as his father, he does not attain to the full responsibility of an adult. "I am only a young boy, madam!" one man of thirty-five, a husband and father, replied to Kathleen Gough's questions about his responsibilities. "My father is alive—what is my responsibility?" (1956, pp. 835–838).

father is expected to maintain an aloof authority toward his son.

A grown man may resent his father's strong authority, but open defiance is rare.

Between mother and son there is everywhere in India a strong, tender, unchanging, dependable bond. The bond is celebrated in sacred writing, romanticized in popular tale, upheld in the actuality of family life. A mother is respected; motherhood is revered.

A family that takes in a girl as bride considers itself superior to the family that gives her in marriage.

brother throughout most of India is expected to keep giving gifts and ritual services to his married sister, perhaps also to her husband and certainly to her children. His benefactions are not requited in any equal measure.

Male roles.

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* #5 - p. 60, 61, 62, 64

A man has a much wider ambit in space and among people. A married couple may not meet often in the course of the daily round. At meals the women customarily serve all the men first and eat only after the men have finished and risen. A wife, in all her relations with her husband, should adhere to the scriptural ideal of being a *Pativrata*, one who follows her husband's will

Thus a wife customarily follows behind her husband when the two happen to walk together; she scrupulously avoids uttering his personal name lest this be taken as a disrespectful liberty; she greets him ritually with gestures of respect and deference.

Within a household a son or daughter must not flout a parent's will, especially not the father's. If grown sons do not wish to follow a parental mandate, they usually find ways to circumvent rather than to contradict it.

Age and sex are the main ordering principles in family hierarchy. "The men have the more decisive authority in the traditional Indian family as compared with women," M. S. Gore notes, "and elders have greater authority as compared with young persons" (1965,

A woman's change of role behavior can be quite great. Mrs. Karve writes that "it is not rare to see women who were nothing but meek nonentities blossom into positive personalities in their middle-aged widowhood, or boss over the weak old husband in the latter part of the married life."

From this age through adolescence his father is expected to be more of a disciplinarian than at any other stage. After the son marries, and certainly when he begets a son of his own, he can become somewhat more independent, though he must always observe great respect for his father.

Male roles continuing.

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* #5 - p. 38, 46

A man is expected to take his sister's children as his special charge and in almost every jati and region, he does so.

Since the mother's brother lives in another place, he need not be concerned with daily affairs or rivalries; he appears only as a gift-giver and helper. "His is either a positive or a neutral, but not a negative role; and distance enables him to cast a cloud of excuses over his actions if they contradict the ideal pattern" (1960, p. 224). A boy's father's brother is usually a kind of secondary father, perhaps less aloof and more approachable than his own father, but nevertheless a figure of similar authority. One's mother's sister may be sentimentally close, but she is physically remote in her own married home, less free to visit and to give to her sister's children than is their mother's brother.

In his role as husband, a man should always be the superior, the initiator, the receiver of deference from his wife. A village wife rarely flouts these expectations openly. Commonly she renders the expected gestures freely, spontaneously, and in full, as part of her womanhood, not out of feelings of duress. The man is expected to make clear demonstration of his husbandly authority at the beginning of a marriage and never to relinquish it, at least not publicly. Moreover, a young husband's personal, conjugal interest in his wife should in no way interfere with his duties to his parents, his siblings, or to other elders of his household.

A marriage begins with the newlyweds as the most junior couple in a multi-couple household. In private, alone together, the new husband may be playful, passionate, argumentative, affectionate. The physical arrangements are usually such that privacy can be attained only briefly, hurriedly, and in darkness. In fine weather, the fields offer some haven. But in the presence of other persons, especially elders of the household, the two must keep their distance and the husband's aloof precedence must prevail.

For this reason a young wife may not prepare any food especially for her husband. If she wants to do some household task for him, she must do it for the whole family. Another reason for the display of indifference is the elders' view that a young couple should have only one interest of their own apart from the rest of the family—in sexual relations and those only in order to beget children."

Roles as husband.

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* #5 - p. 71, 72, 73, 74

The ordinary man contents himself with one pair. They plow his fields, help sow his seed, send water to his crops from the wells during the dry months of both winter and summer, press his sugar cane, and carry to market any produce he may have to sell. If he loses one of them, he must borrow an animal from one of his neighbors. But borrowing is uncertain. When he needs the help of bullocks most, his neighbors are all using theirs. If he cannot borrow, and cannot face the burden of the purchase of a new animal, he must sacrifice his holdings and work only a small plot by hand, or take a chance at hiring himself out to others more fortunate.

The villager depends on a cow or a buffalo for his milk supply. He prefers a buffalo, because it gives more milk and its milk is richer in the fats which go into *ghi* (clarified butter). If a buffalo is beyond his means, he invests in a cow. If he is too poor for a cow, he gets a goat or two. It is not so much the milk that he wants as the *ghi* made from it. He and his family drink very little fresh milk lest they cut down the quantity of *ghi*. The whole milk is boiled, set, and churned daily. The butter is accumulated for a week and clarified. It is the only animal fat used in the diet of the villagers except in the few cases where meat is used. The buttermilk from each day's churning is used freely in a number of important dishes, adding to their flavor and nutrition. During a great part of the year it constitutes the farmer's early morning meal.

Man and his cow.

As we go through the village, we are no longer conscious of mud walls, but of the life going on before and behind them. Before them, in the lanes, children skip and turn somersaults, farmers feed their animals, and craftsmen work at their trades. Behind them, further protected by the cattle rooms, are the women and small children in the family courtyards. Women of families of serving castes are obliged to go out for a part of each day, to the houses of employers, carrying water or grinding grain. But in every home where it is possible, the women and smaller children of the family—be it large or small—spend their lives in the family courtyard. The mud walls which protect the villager's family and possessions are as high at the back of the house as at the front.

The men regard this courtyard as the women's realm, and chaff the man who spends much time there. For themselves they have mud platforms at the front of their houses where they do their chores and sit with friends, smoking and talking. Or the men of related households share a *baithak*, or "sitting place" under a big *neem* tree. A man does not go into the family quarters of another unless special business calls him there. Then he usually enters accompanied by a man of the family, coughing loudly to warn the women into seclusion. The Sahib has been in some of these courtyards in times of distress. At such times the daughters have helped with his ministrations; rarely, a wife has appeared. In their own courtyards, the women go about their work scolding, laughing, chaffing, grumbling, without reserve. But the instant a man of the family enters they become self-conscious covering (or making a pretense at covering) their faces, bowing their heads, and in every way emphasizing their sex and their role as subordinates. In families where economic pressure com-

Walls and courtyards - whose turf.

* #16 - p. 72, 73

MARRIAGE

"IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY FOR A DAY GET DRUNK. IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY FOR A WEEK BUY A PIG. IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY FOR A MONTH GET MARRIED. IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY FOREVER AND EVER GROW A GARDEN."

THIS INDIAN EXPRESSION SAYS QUITE A LOT. ARRANGED MARRIAGES, PERSONAL ADS IN THE PAPERS, DOWRY DEATHS, BRIDE BURNING - NO PUN INTENDED,MARRIAGE IN INDIA IS A HOT TOPIC. WITH THE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF PEOPLE (EDUCATION AND WEALTH NOT WITH-STANDING), THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IS UNDERGOING CHANGE IN INDIA. THE SERIES OF PASSAGES HERE RELATE MORE TO THE PAST THAN TO THE PRESENT, BUT IT IS STILL A WEALTH OF MATERIAL OFFERING THE TEACHER MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPARISONS.

"If you want to be happy for a day, get drunk. If you want to be happy for a week, buy a pig. If you want to be happy for a month, get married. If you want to be happy for ever and ever, grow a garden."

A great opening quote.

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* #6 - p. 69

The role of a girl in Indian society is a thankless one. No domestic task, no drudgery is considered too much for her. Up before everyone else and last to go to bed, she leads the life of a slave. A mother before ever having children of her own, Amrita had brought up her brothers. It was she who had guided their first steps, foraged for their food in the hotel refuse, sewn together the rags that served as their clothes, massaged their fleshless limbs, organized their games, deloused their heads. Right from her earliest years, her mother had unflaggingly prepared her for the one big event of her life, the one which for a day would transform a child of poverty into the subject of all the conversation in the small world of the poor who surrounded her: her marriage. All her education was directed toward that end. The shanty of cardboard and planks in their first slum, the pavement squats, had been for her places of apprenticeship. It was there that the skills of a model mother and perfect wife had been passed on to her. Like all Indian parents, the Pals were aware that one day they would be judged on the manner in which their daughter conducted herself in her husband's house and, as her role could only ever be one of submission, Amrita had been trained from the very first to renounce all personal inclinations and relinquish all play in order to serve her parents and brothers, something that she had always done with a smile. Ever since she was a small child she had accepted the Indian idea of marriage, a conception that meant that Hasari would one day say to Kovalski, "My daughter does not belong to me. She has only been lent to me by God until she marries. She belongs to the boy who will be her husband."

Indian custom generally requires that a girl should be married well before puberty, hence the occurrence of the child "marriages" that seem so barbaric to Westerners. In such cases it is only a question of a ceremony. The real marriage takes place only after the girl's first period. Then the father of the "bride" goes to the father of the "groom" and informs him that his daughter is now capable of bearing a child. A more definitive ceremony is subsequently arranged and it is then that the young girl leaves her parents' home to go and live with the boy to whom she has been "married" for years.

As his father before him had done for his sisters and as millions of other Indian fathers had done for their daughters, Hasari had to get together a dowry. Indira Gandhi might well have forbidden this ancestral custom but that did not prevent its continuing in modern India in a way that was even more tyrannical. "I can't give my daughter to a man who is paralyzed or blind or a leper!" the rickshaw puller was to lament to Kovalski. Only such disinherited people would agree to take a girl in marriage without a dowry. The poor man never stopped doing all kinds of calculations but they all came back to the same fateful figure. Five thousand rupees was the sum he had to collect before the very humblest of boys would accept his daughter. Five thousand rupees! That meant two whole years of running about between the shafts of his rickshaw or a lifetime of being indebted to the slum's *mahajan*. But what lifetime and how much running about? "When you cough red," he was to go on to say, "you watch the sun rise each morning and wonder whether you'll see it set."

A girl in Indian society.

* #8 - p. 389, 390

How many millions of Indian families, for generations, have been ruined by the marriages of their daughters? First there was the dowry, an ancestral custom officially abolished since Independence, but one that still prevailed in practice. The small farmer with whom Hasari's father had negotiated the marriage of his last daughter had demanded one bicycle, two cotton loincloths, a transistor, and half an ounce of gold, plus a few jewels for the young bride—all under the guise of a dowry. In total his requirements amounted to a good thousand rupees (some one hundred U.S. dollars).

Custom required, furthermore, that the girl's father, alone, covers the cost of the ceremony, which meant finding another thousand rupees to feed the families and their guests, and buy presents for the officiating Brahmin. For these poor people it was a cruel bloodletting.

Dowry.

And until 1805 the British Government made no attempt to suppress *sati*. In that year the government called upon the Sudder Dewancy Adalat for the opinion of its pundits as to the legality of the rite under Hindu law. The pundits gave this astounding *bewasta*: "Every woman of the four castes is permitted to burn herself with the body of her husband provided that she is not pregnant, nor is in a state of uncleanliness, nor under the age of puberty. . . . A woman who has infant children and can procure another person to undertake the charge of bringing them up is permitted to burn herself. It is contrary to the law, as well as usage of the country, to cause a woman to burn herself against her wish by administering drugs to stupefy or intoxicate her. When women burn

The custom of sati.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

* #6 - p. 68

THERE WAS a story in the morning newspaper about a drunken bridegroom in Delhi. He and his friends had fortified themselves before the ceremony and arrived in an excited condition. The bride's family was furious and its senior male representatives went to their counterparts in the bridegroom's family to remonstrate. The wretched bridegroom was sacked on the spot. But both sides needed to save family honour. Fortunately there were several young single men at the wedding and a likely bachelor on the bridegroom's side was selected. His income, family background and prospects were swiftly vetted and, it may be assumed, his horoscope was also checked. He fitted the bill and was, moreover, sober. The marriage went ahead with the reserve, and one can only guess at the feelings of the bride.

Marriage for millions of Indian families is a dreaded financial burden, a cause of debt and debt bondage and a contributor to misery. In some regions and among some classes the marriage of a daughter is the loss of a pair of working hands and parents demand a bride-price in compensation from the bridegroom's family; but more usually a bride is expected to bring a dowry. On top of this expense, parents try as a matter of honour to stage weddings on a lavish scale. The wealthy can meet such expense, and rich men will welcome the opportunity to dazzle their friends and pour away some black money, the money they do not declare to the taxman. But poor men marrying their children may have to borrow and take on debts that will shadow their lives, forcing some to become bonded labourers, a species of slave.

The dreaded financial burden.

A number of things dictate the dowry's size. The better a young man's education the larger the dowry that may be commanded. The spread of education has strengthened the hold of dowry. There is virtually a sliding scale: a graduate of a British or American university, a doctor, an engineer, a well-placed civil servant or professional man, can think of receiving a dowry of £30,000 or so. A man resident in Britain or the United States who returns to India to find a bride can also expect a handsome dowry. 'Green card holder' is a fly commonly played over the waters, a green card being the permit to settle in America. But the qualifications of bridegrooms and brides are not the only consideration. As the advertisements illustrate, match-making parents will want to know about the financial and business standing of other parents, and brothers and uncles, too.

An uneducated boy is obviously worth much less, but a bright office boy can trade on his position to call for a dowry of £1,000 or £2,000. In the middle reaches of society a young man might demand a car as part of the deal, or a television set, or a motor scooter. Lower down the scale a bicycle might be expected. For his part, a girl's father can talk of his daughter's comeliness, homeliness, purity, educational qualifications and fair skin. A light complexion is a most desirable quality in a colour conscious society, and many girls are advertised as being of a 'wheatish' colour. But a girl's pale beauty will never be enough on its own for a father with an eligible son and an eye for a large dowry.

Dowry has become a form of extortion. A wedding ceremony in Delhi in 1982 was interrupted when the bridegroom's family heard that the bride's father had just made a large profit in a business deal. They asked for a share of it to be added to the dowry. The businessman agreed and the wedding was resumed. A cartoon in the *Hindustan Times* showed a bride entering her in-laws' home. She was depicted in their minds' eye as a parcel of rupees labelled dowry.

The exploitation and pressuring of young married women in respect of dowry is part of the phenomenon known as bride burning. An extraordinarily large number of young wives have ended their lives by immolating themselves with kitchen-stove paraffin, and a number have been murdered by their in-laws and their bodies burnt. In 1981, in Delhi alone, more than 500 women were burnt to death in their homes. Some were accidental deaths, but notes and other evidence have shown that many girls ended their lives because they could no longer endure the harassment of in-laws, the demands for more dowry. Others were murdered.

The dowry flourishes because of its part in social and religious tradition, in family pride, and consciousness of social position. It is also sustained by greed.

Dowry size.

* #2 - p. 27, 28

wooden bed was brought on which we were all four installed; the fire was heaped up and the bridegroom was produced. He had a crew-cut and looked more like a college boy than someone destined the next day to set off in a chariot drawn by bullocks to fetch his bride for the consummation of his marriage from a village two miles away.

This is the extent of the ceremony. The family of the bridegroom sends a present of sweetmeats to the house of the bride, and the following evening, when it is dark, he sets off in the chariot, accompanied by the rest of his party on foot. At the house of the bride the parents bury a plough-shaft in the ground; another is buried outside the house of the groom. This day is chosen after long consultation with astrologers, as being an auspicious one.

At the bride's house there is a feast which lasts most of the night and the next morning, at dawn, she sets off with him for his village. Before leaving, their nails are cut by the village barber. With them the bride's parents send a return present; one or more painted pots containing sweets, and when the pair enter the house of the bridegroom, his sister demands yet another present – only if it is given will the bride be allowed to pass. They then worship the family god. This is the extent of the ceremony. They have sometimes already been married for years.

The ceremony.

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* #11 - p. 105, 106

"Marital relationships are formally one-sided and unbalanced: the boy's side is the high and demanding side, while the girl's side is the low and giving side" (Marriott 1955b, p. 176). The village from which the bride comes is inferior, for purposes of marriage arrangements, to the village into which she is married.

Parents may be willing to arrange the marriage of a son to a girl from a family a bit lower than theirs in prestige and status but are usually unwilling to marry a daughter into a family of lower status within the jati. That course not only consigns their daughter to an inferior family but also lowers their own prestige in the eyes of their jati fellows.

This common preference to marry a daughter for better and not for worse is formalized in some jatis as a rigid rule of hypergamy. Under that rule a woman must marry into her own section or into one that is higher but must not be married into a lower section of the jati. A man may take a wife from a lower section.

Four pages of quotes on marriage roles: the wife at home, the young daughter, child marriage, a second wife.

* #5 - p. 236, 238

The bride bullied by the mother-in-law is a well-worked theme in the Indian cinema; and a girl may suffer in a marriage and seek escape through desperate means for reasons unconnected with dowry. A harassed girl may also try to buy peace by persuading her parents to give something to her in-laws.

In places like Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, India's international bridgeheads which have closer contact with western manners, there are some who reject traditional marriage and choose courtship, love marriages and the small, independent family: husband, wife and children. The way of life and work in cities makes this easier. Instead of being kept apart, as was traditional, young single men and women mix at universities, in research institutions, in the civil service, in banks and offices. In the same way that city life breaks down some of the caste barriers, because people mingle, it also breaches the sex barrier. In this respect urban India is going through a transition.

In marriage India remains traditional and cautious. Virginity is prized, but for most girls virtue never becomes a pressing matter because they are married very young. The law forbidding girls to marry until they are 18 is everywhere ignored, India being a country of great freedoms because laws simply cannot be enforced.

Child marriage is advocated in old Hindu teaching, and in the countryside in particular there are strong social pressures for parents to marry off girls at or before menarche. A girl still unmarried in her early teens is considered on the shelf. The custom is seen as a practical way of dealing with the onset of sexual maturity, especially in a society where virginity is important. In Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, half the girls married in a year are under 15. Many thousands of children are married at a tender age, boys of 10 to girls of 7, for example, and usually remain in their own homes after the ceremonies until they are old enough to live together: in many cases until the boy has grown a moustache.

In August of 1980, in the village of Jhadli, fifty miles south of Jaipur, chief city of Rajasthan, a girl called Om Kanwar, aged 16, climbed onto her husband's funeral pyre, placed his head in her lap and ordered the pyre to be soaked in ghee, clarified butter, and lit. She was dressed in the clothes she had worn at her wedding. A large crowd of men, women and children looked on as the fire started. The girl was consumed in the flames and made no cry of pain.

Sati, or suttee, was outlawed by Lord William Bentinck, the governor general, in 1829, his action being a test of the principle of British interference in Indian rites. Although the British thought sati barbaric they were wary of doing anything about it and only did so when Indians, themselves, led by Raja Rammohan Roy, demanded its prohibition.

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* #2 - p. 30, 31, 32

Collver notes that more than half of all marriages in India end before the wife reaches age forty-five because of the death of one of the pair (1963, pp. 86–87).

Nonetheless, family development throughout village India does occur in several stages, distinguishable to the observer and demarcated by the villagers. Marriages, deaths, and formal partition are the main marking events. The marriages of the children are the grand events of a family's career.

by death or partition. If husband and wife find themselves unable to bring forth a son biologically, or if no son survives childhood, they may bring one into the family socially through adoption.

the person of a pubescent daughter in a household, unwed and unclaimed, is uncomfortable, even ritually dangerous for the other members of the family. It is uncomfortable, because her continuing presence betokens either neglect of duty on their part or grave personal defect on hers. It can be dangerous because her untethered sexuality may bring social disgrace, perhaps supernatural retribution, on the whole family unless she is promptly bound in marriage.

Another alternative, less commonly taken because of considerations of cost and temperament, is that the husband take another wife, or several, in order to beget a son. Still another alternative is open to a prosperous landowner who has a daughter but not a son. He can arrange a marriage for his daughter to a man who will join his family.

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* #5 - p. 96, 97, 98

Each family attempts to maximize its gain through the marriage and to minimize any loss, either in status, wealth, or the welfare of its child. Each brings to bear whatever resources it has; if it is deficient in one kind of resource it plays up its other strengths. A family with a dim-witted, torpid son uses its wealth and influence to secure a passable bride for him. A family whose son has a research degree and a foot in the higher civil service can arrange a match that bejewels the family with dowry, prestige, and the comely person of the bride. The negotiations are usually initiated by the family of a girl.

In his person the boy should be active, healthy, somewhat older than the girl, not unusually disfavored in appearance, and of a suitable level of education. The family of the boy looks for counterpart attributes in the girl; her demeanor, health, and diligence are politely but firmly ascertained. Fairness of skin is a decided boon as is also her general attractiveness of appearance.

A marriage alliance always entails some redistribution of wealth as well as of persons. The rules for that redistribution vary among regions. In a good many jatis of South India, the family of the groom pays bride wealth at marriage to the family of the bride (Karve 1965, p. 180; Srinivas 1942, pp. 14–21). After marriage, however, the woman's family continue to give gifts to her and her children. In most of North India it is the family of the bride that gives a dowry to the groom and his family, with little or no return from them.

Arranging for the marriage of children is a critical responsibility for the head of a family, and many men come to find themselves under severe pressure on that account both from inside and outside the family.

The education of his daughter may present a knotty problem to a father. If she can read and write there may be no difficulty and some advantage on that score in getting a daughter married. But if she has gone through secondary school, it may be hard to find a groom for her whose family will be willing to take in an educated girl. They may fear that she will not make a proper, dutiful wife because of her schooling. If there are a good many educated men in her jati, education can be an asset to a marriageable girl, but if there are few she may have been educated beyond her marriage bracket.

'We do not talk to each other,' says Ram as his wife moves about the room soundlessly, comes and stands behind him like a gentle shadow. 'The relationship between husband and wife is very private. It needs no display. Nor words for communion. How then can we have discord when we are ready to listen to each other? When the two are one, there is no master. When one forgets, the other remembers. One is not complete without the other. Woman stands equal to man in the Vedas. Man's duty to her is as integral and binding as is her devotion to him. Through service to her husband, who is also her guru, a woman fulfils herself. Like the river that does not drink its own water. Or the tree its own fruit. It takes seven colours to make a rainbow and perhaps as many strains to form an "ideal" woman. She is to a man as mother to a son, as one who serves, as one who is a wise adviser, a lover as good as a courtesan and above all, like the earth, one who has the ability to forgive...'

To marry young is no longer fashionable nor legal as it was in the medieval Hindu period."

During the day the men study, the women are busy with the household. We visit our wives between nine and twelve at night. Never after midnight, for then is the hour of sleep when the body must rest and charge itself for the next day.'

Everything it seems has a place and a time in this household—prayer and study, love and play, duty and leisure, the routines of the young and old—all laid out in the musty books that were conceived no one knows when. I watch Ram's young son dressed like his father, sitting with a brass pitcher of water,

No public displays of affection.

* #5 - p. 58, 59

Bring a wife into your home and protect her, the Prophet had said. Sex in the Koran is compared to a husbandman's tilth, a serious affair. He sows the seed in order to reap the harvest but he chooses his own time and mode of cultivation. He does not sow out of season nor cultivate in a manner which will injure or exhaust the soil. The same regard and consideration is due to a wife and woman. Treat her kindly, dismiss her gently, were the words of the Prophet

'After marriage, a man and a woman are not two separate beings. They meet and complement each other. They become one like these two hands,' says a *dhobi*, gently bringing his dark weathered hands together in a *namaskar*. The ancient greeting, reinforces an ideal. 'There can be no greeting without the coming together of the two hands, no oneness without the togetherness they suggest. Both are necessary, both equally important. Man and woman, like the two wheels of a cart, have to move in unison.'

I will spread in your hand
Like the red of henna
Become the bells around your ankles;
And if they break and scatter
I will turn into sand
under your feet...

Thus runs a song of the desert, sung by a wandering ministrel, which eulogizes the love of a woman for her man. Love lies in surrender.

Marriage in the life of every woman, and, as importantly, in the life of a community, is a maturing. It signifies the flowering of life. But for Maangi, meaning one who needs, marriage came at the age of one, before she had learnt to dream. She was sent to her husband's home at ten, an age when a girl is considered old enough to carry two pitchers of water on her head. That in the desert means the coming of age for a girl. Carrying water, gathering firewood, rolling out flat bread, caring for a goat, a cow, a child were functions that came naturally to her. Marriage was something that also happened in its time. In her case it was not an ideal love. 'I began life with a weight on my back,' says Maangi, her voice sapped of emotion. 'I bore three children in three years. Everyone was pleased. The children cry now as I break stones on the roads.'

To become "one."

'How can you live in such a nice house and not share your life with a man?' she asks, unaware that she is treading on another's private territory. I have a full life, I find myself explaining. I have my work, travel, friends, a larger family. My protests fall on deaf ears. 'All that has meaning only when one is married and has children,' she repeats, unconvinced. My reality has stirred a discomfort in her and in me, one that I have chosen to set aside. Doesn't she, too, live alone, work for a living? But she is a married woman. She even has a baby, I am told, as a certification. The fact that she walked out of her husband's home, annoyed by the squabbles of a joint family, is only a matter to be commiserated with. A bad marriage is a trick of fate, but no marriage is beyond fate.

'Are you happy?' I ask a friend, who after being single until she was forty decided to plunge into marriage. 'I am deeply unhappy,' she says, contradicting the glow on her face. 'I had to do it, get it out of the way. I am now a married woman. No one asks questions; they accept me more naturally. I have been freed. Now even if I go around alone or have affairs no one would dare wonder. I have acquired a label, gained a social identity. I will soon be a mother. The child hopefully will give meaning to my life.'

If the new wife fails to bear a child she is shunned, if she comes with an inadequate dowry she may be harassed or burnt to death. Like daily weather reports, city newspapers carry stories of young women committing suicide or lighting their bodies doused with kerosene. Such accidents do not, of course, happen in fashionable suburbs like mine but in colonies where the aspirations of a newly emerging middle class, determined by the good life of the city, are thwarted. The bride (and her dowry, which, incidentally, is illegal), the quickest way of realizing these aspirations, becomes the victim if she fails to fulfil them. 'Women are not for burning,' was a slogan raised in Delhi's Model Town when a young woman of twenty-four, as she watched television, was set on fire by her mother-in-law.

Bearing a child, a bad marriage.

* #5 - p. 86, 87

To voice a pain, to divulge a secret, was considered sacriiege, a breach of family trust. Today, voices are raised without fear, and are heard outside the walls of homes that once kept a women protected, also isolated. Some of the women who speak here have stepped out. Others who have not, are beginning to be aware, eager to find expression. But let them speak for themselves:

> 'My father who painted houses in the big city brought me to Calcutta to see the Durga Puja celebrations. He fell down one day from some scaffolding and died. My mother never came to the city. She died in the village of tuberculosis. With no one in the village, I came to the city to find a job as a maidservent. I was asked, 'Where are your parents? Do you have a husband? Who will vouch for you?' I had no one. A woman without a family is worse than a dog. A woman I met took pity on me and arranged for me to marry a man she knew. I agreed. I thought I would have a husband, a man to protect and provide for me. The man was sixty years old and had a wife back in the village. And the home he gave me was just a tenement, without a crack for light or air. I soon gave birth to twins who died of rickets. A year later I bore him a girl. She is six months old. I have not yet given her a name. I wait for my husband to come. He comes late at night when I am already asleep. He leaves early and gives me no money. He fights when I ask. I don't want to have another child. But if I get sterilized, I will no longer be a woman and he will leave me. Where will I go then? What will happen to this little girl.

Comments by wives.

* #5 - p. 109

Why should I call a man malik when he is no longer my protector? I was married to him when I was still a young girl bicycling around and playing. I was fourteen and he was sixteen. The month I menstruated I was married. I fainted when he approached me at night. Tie up her hands and feet and go on with what you have to do, his mother told him. He did. I was pregnant. Soon after, he disappeared. They said he had gone to another town to get a job. He never returned. I went back to my mother's house. He has not divorced me. No, I will not go back to him. Nor will I marry again. All men are scoundrels. I will work in this factory and live for my little girl.

Rukshana, Gulbarga, Karnataka

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I was married seventeen years ago and have failed to bear a child. I went to temples, to godmen, to doctors and faith healers. Nothing worked. My mother-in-law taunts me. She pushed my husband to take another wife. He is her only son among seven daughters. She wants him to have a son who will continue the family line. Her nagging forced us to leave the house. We left with nothing and slowly made a home for ourselves. My husband is a good man and says nothing even when pressured by his family. I feel guilty for having failed him. Even if he takes another wife I will accept it. I will work and make my life.

Vaisali Madho Rane, Pune

Like all other girls in the village I was married young, given a dowry and sent away to my husband's village with songs and tears. When I gave birth to a still-born child, my husband drove me out of the house. I returned to my mother's village. Since I became a village nurse, I have found a new life, I have made friends and won the respect of my village. I no longer feel abandoned.

Saadu Bai, Rajouri village, Maharashtra.

* #5 - p. 111, 114

After performing the trifling task to which he had so forcibly called her, she returned, all smiles. Her husband had played his role of master, and she the role of obedient wife, to their own satisfaction.

Whether fear exists or not every woman looks up to her husband as her master. Be he kind or be he cruel, it is her duty to obey him. If he punishes her she accepts it like a naughty child.

It would be unfair to the joint family, which has much in its favor economically, to accuse it of disallowing love and companionship between husbands and wives. Such companionship would be possible, if there were less emphasis on sex. As it is, a woman performs her duty to her husband, satisfying his elemental needs, while she lavishes more and more of her love on her children. In the smaller homes, where the walls surround a single family, there is more natural relationship. With no older women present constantly to remind husband and wife of their respective roles, they work together for the good of their little family, without excessive consciousness of sex. In such courtyards, the wife may draw her scarf closely over her face when her husband enters and do his bidding without question, but she is free to talk with him alone. Even while he eats and she stands nearby ready to supply his wants, she may tell him about the baby's latest prank. While he washes and prepares to return to his work or to a visit with his neighbors, he complains to her of the lack of rain or the destruction by the deer in the farthest *arhar* (pulse) field

The man as master.

* #16 - p. 80, 81

Iqbal felt irritated. It was not possible to keep Indians off the subject of sex for long. It obsessed their minds. It came out in their art, literature and religion. One saw it on the hoardings in the cities advertising aphrodisiacs and curatives for ill effects of masturbation. One saw it in the law courts and market places, where hawkers did a thriving trade selling oil made of the skin of sand lizards to put life into tired groins and increase the size of the phallus. One read it in the advertisements of quacks who claimed to possess remedies for barrenness and medicines to induce wombs to yield male children. One heard about it all the time. No people used incestuous abuse quite as casually as did the Indians. Terms like *sala*, wife's brother ("I would like to sleep with your sister"), and *susra*, father-in-law ("I would like to sleep with your daughter") were as often terms of affection for one's friends and relatives as expressions of anger to insult one's enemies. Conversation on any topic—politics, philosophy, sport—soon came down to sex, which everyone enjoyed with a lot of giggling and hand-slapping.

Sex and the .....

* #12 p. 126, 127

CHILDREN

EVERYWHERE YOU GO IN INDIA FROM THE TEEMING CITIES OF BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA TO THE RURAL MUD BRICK VILLAGES OF THE DECCAN PLATEAU ONE SEES WOMEN WITH INFANTS AT THEIR BREAST, IN A CARRIAGE, OR WALKING/CRAWLING ALONG WITH THEIR MOMS. CHILDREN ARE IMPORTANT, VALUED, ESPECIALLY BOYS FOR THE OBVIOUS CULTURAL REASONS. A WOMAN GAINS INCREASED STATUS WITH THE BIRTH OF A CHILD, MORE SO IF IT'S A MALE. RITUALS ABOUND FROM THE CHILD'S CONCEPTION TO ITS MARRIAGE - SOME UNIVERSAL, OTHERS INDIAN.

"Treat your son as a rajah until he is five, as a slave until he is fifteen, and then as a friend."

Every year, in every Hindu family, the pots were ceremonially broken; also they were broken every time there was a birth, as a mark of welcome to the new life, and every time there was a death, to allow the deceased to leave for the afterlife complete with his plates and dishes. They were also broken on the occasion of a marriage; in the bride's family because by leaving, the young woman died to the eyes of her family, and in the groom's family because the arrival of the young wife meant the birth of a new household. Again, they were broken to mark numerous festivals because the gods wanted everything on earth to be new. In short, a potter was never in danger of being out of work.

Breaking the pots.

* #8 - p. 240

There is little hope of eradicating poverty if India's birthrate is not brought down. Drastic measures to achieve this were tried but because of democratic pressures, they fortunately amounted only to a brief experiment. If democracy flounders, the experiment may not be as brief next time. The most immediate threat posed by the population explosion is that India may not be able to feed itself. If it has to return to the days when it was fed by American aid, there will be no hope of a relationship of equals, which is the only healthy relationship between democracies.

The population is putting great pressure on India's ecology. Deforestation is creating climatic changes which threaten the monsoon that India's agriculture depends on. The population explosion also means that unemployment is rising. Villagers with no land and no jobs are migrating into the cities where they stand a chance of scraping a living. Civic services cannot cope with this new burden, so slums proliferate. They become breeding grounds for discontent, disease, and despair.

More births equals more poverty.

'We have three children and are too poor to have any more.' She had heard about this operation, performed with what women call the magic telescope, and was persuaded that it was so quick and efficient that she would be home in time to cook the evening meal, and fit enough to work in the fields next day. The government reward of 120 rupees was the equivalent of more than two weeks' wages.

Students of India's population say that more than 4 million people should be sterilized every year if population growth is to be contained to an 'acceptable' level. Given that as a target, surgeons like Dr Sharma just cannot work fast enough. India is accepting that nothing can stop the population rising to a billion by the end of this century.

women because there is a direct relationship between female literacy and family limitation.

The family planning message is spread through television and the cinema, and condoms are boldly advertised. As the new population drive got under way I visited a birth control clinic and saw a large portrait of the prime minister, tastefully framed with packets of contraceptives.

Female literacy = family limitation.

* #2 - p. 41, 43

Educated boys and their families increasingly, as we shall note again later, insist on a bride with an education suitable to the education of the groom. Thus, as more boys receive high school or college education, the incentive to educate girls also increases.

To skimp on the dowry is not only to put one's own child at a disadvantage but also to demean the whole family.

All marriage plans must reckon with the supernatural forces that affect the course of every critical venture.

In South India, there are many who make no use of astrology. But peoples of all jatis believe in auspicious and inauspicious days and in favorable and unfavorable omens. T

Another way of reducing the uncertainties of a complex marriage negotiation is to make a definite agreement before the prospective bride reaches puberty. Then all can proceed according to a clear schedule without pressure of the problem of the girl's sexuality. She begins full marital life soon after menarche. In some jatis the exact interval is prescribed, thus for certain Brahmins the nuptial rites that mark the start of sexual relations traditionally took place sixteen days after the onset of first menstruation.

A wedding is the largest single expense that most families have to bear.

The very poorest family, with exceedingly little to spare, still manages to pour out three or four months' income on the marriage rites. The relatively rich families devote close to a year's total income to marry each son.

Break the bank - get married.

* #5 - p. 109, 110, 111

The sharp difference between the status of male and female, a difference that runs through all social relations, is presaged by the kind of welcome given to a newborn son—with drumming, singing, and proud public announcements—in contrast to that accorded to a new daughter, whose advent is more quietly observed. The formal inferiority of girls to boys seems mitigated in this village, as was noted before, by the mothers' attitudes; in any event girls show little suffering on that score. But one result of this differential interest is that fewer girl babies survive, not because they are deliberately neglected but rather because much greater medical efforts are usually made to cure a sick baby boy than a sick infant girl. The infant mortality rate for boys in one Khalapur sample was 25 percent, for girls 41 percent (Minturn and Hitchcock 1963,

the women of the family usually do not enter onto the platform where the men spend most of their leisure time, asleep and awake. The men typically come into the women's quarters for some specific purpose, and, having accomplished that purpose, leave.

the most common form of punishment is scolding. A usual form of scolding is to call the child by a "derogatory but not obscene name"; that is, by the name of either of the two lowest jatis, the leatherworkers or the sweepers (Minturn 1963, p. 327). What he must not touch and who he should not be are inculcated as soon as the child can understand anything. The training repeatedly reinforces the idea that there is a hierarchy of relations, inside and outside the family, and that a proper child carefully observes the proprieties of subordinate and superior roles.

a child should not be praised to his face lest this make him disobedient.

Most village women spend a great deal of their lives within a narrow courtyard. The space is cramped and opportunities for friction abound. A woman, after she is a mother and a secure matron, does not hesitate to defend her rights in the household vigorously and loudly. She has come from another family, often from another village; she harbors no special loyalty or affection for her sister-in-law who is usually from yet another village and family.

Little children should be see but.....

* #5 - p. 120, 121, 126

Single Indian girls are, on the whole, chaste and dutiful. This is only partly because they do not have much opportunity for pre-marital sexual activity even if they wanted it. They tend to be respectful to their parents, with a strong
applies throughout the social spectrum

The teen-ager with emotions complicated by boyfriend problems, well known to western parents, is largely unknown in India. A middle class mother recently told me that her daughter was dating, and said it in a way which indicated she thought it avant-garde. When I asked if she were anxious about this break with tradition, she said: 'No. The ayah is with her all the time. The girl and the boy talk and play records, and the ayah goes for tea in the servants' quarters, but she's never far away.'

many young Indian boys get sexual knowledge from school chatter, occasionally from obliging female relatives in the joint family and also from prostitutes in the towns. To most Indian couples, he says, the concept of privacy is as alien as that of love, and they rarely get a room to themselves, the wife sleeping with women members of her husband's family, and the husband sleeping alongside the men.

'No Indian language has a word for orgasm. Frankly, most young men go into marriage for sex, children and companionship, in that order, and most Indian men are not even aware that women can also have orgasm.' Mr Singh regards this as 'a sad commentary on the people of a country which produced the most widely read treatise on the art of sex, *Kama Sutra*, and elevated the act of sex to spiritual sublimity by explicit depictions on its temples.'

Above all, youngmen (it is almost always one word in India) are impressed with the importance of the old tradition of retaining their semen, the 'gem of life, the treasure of life' as it is called, and to avoid losing it through 'hand practice', too much love-making and what is picturesquely called 'nightfall'

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Sex education.

* #2 - p. 33, 34

A *dai* or mid-wife, who delivers a boy in a village gets a sari and a nurse in a city hospital gets a gleaming new wristwatch. They get nothing if they help deliver a girl. In Punjab, it is asserted, that girls are conceived on dark nights and boys on moonlit ones. It is a boy if sexual intercourse takes place in the first half of the night when the man is stronger; a girl if it takes place in the second half of the night when the woman is stronger

'A woman should be a lump of clay' goes one proverb. Like clay she should be moulded in the form of an ideal woman—pretty, dutiful, flexible, fit to be a perfect housekeeper. 'A girl grows as fast as a banana plant, when you feed her, let her stomach weep a little,' is a Bengali proverb. The belief is, a girl needs less food to survive. She does not go out to work or study. Her place is in her home

Statistics from hospitals reveal that girl children get less priority in medical aid, are grossly malnourished and less breast-fed than the boys.''

Out of the 8000 abortions that were carried out after pre-natal sex determination, it was found that 7999 were female foetuses. The only exception was a Jewish mother who wanted a daughter.

In most cases a woman can't win. If she produces daughters she is shunned. If she doesn't, then, too, she is shunned. And if she is barren she is 'worse than mud.' When she fails in her most integral function she finds herself ostracized, often abandoned. In the Bishnoi community even a sterile man has to accept defeat if he finds the sandals of another man outside his doorstep. His wife is entitled to take another man if he has proven less than one.

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A child is God's gift, an auspicious symbol, a helping hand at work, a walking stick in old age, a solace in life deeply furrowed by insecurity, disease and monotony. Yet the process that brings life into light is enmeshed in dark fears, in mystery and uncertainty. 'When you give life you get life.'

A hundred years ago in the villages of Maharashtra, as elsewhere, the mother and child were traditionally isolated, laid on a cot, under which an earthen jar with burning cowdung cakes was placed. On the first day and the next three following days the child was given a rag soaked in castor oil to suck. From the fourth day the mother suckled the child and was given a meal of wheat flour boiled in clarified butter and sugar. She was considered impure for eleven days and on the twelfth day she and the child were bathed and the room cleaned and smeared with cowdung. The mother was led into the courtyard where she was made to set five stones in the name of the goddess Satwai. She would then anoint the image with vermilion powder, sandal paste, flowers and *betel* leaves and rub the child's brow with ash exclaiming: 'Hail Satwai, keep the child safe. It is not mine. It is yours.' Walking around the stones she would then return home.

In most Hindu homes *jat-karma* is a rite conducted after delivery when the father comes in to look at the baby's face. If he is looking at the face of a first-born son he will be absolved of all debts to the gods and ancestors. The next rite is *nam-karana* when the child gets a name. As a priest propitiates clay gods decked and smeared with sandal, the aunt sweetens the child's mouth and whispers its name in its ear. Among the Muslims it is called *nam-rakhai*. The child's name engraved on silver leaves is sent around with the *betel* leaf that signifies the growth of a creeper. The fortieth day is the *chillah* when the baby goes from the lap to the cradle.

A child a God's gift.

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* #5 - p. 76, 77

'Even the unborn child while still in the womb,' writes Kakar, 'wins for its mother the love, respect and acceptance of the community. Each child born and safely brought to flower becomes for her a certification and a redemption.' *

In one of the *pido* songs the wife tells her husband to buy her not one but six *chunris:*

Gladly drape my mother-in-law with the first
For she gave birth to you, my love
The second, to my sister-in-law give
Who fondled you in her lap as a child
To my eldest sister-in-law, the third;
Who gave us for a night our very first room of love
Where we played together, turning like the *svastika,*
the travelling sun.
The fourth, to my sister-in-law
Who gave us the couch on which we first rested that same night
The fifth, to the mid-wife, who gave me courage
To withstand the anguished hour of labour
And with the sixth *chunri,* my husband, drape your tender wife who gives you now continuance of your Family Name.

The birth of a girl grant elsewhere, here grant a son.' In the Rig Veda, that for millenniums has determined the rhythms of Indian social and religious life, daughters are conspicuous by their absence. Hymns pray for sons and grandsons, for male offspring, for male issue, for male descendants. An ancient rite designed to elicit the birth of a male baby, and to magically change the sex of the unborn child, if it be female, continues to be performed over pregnant women in traditional Hindu households. The first son who is referred to as *dharamputra* performs the last rite of the parents thereby guaranteeing a release from *put* or the world. He is considered a saviour, one who carries on the family line, and is indispensable ritualistically and economically. 'A forest is not made of one tree, a Jat not made of one son,' claim the Jats in Haryana. 'May you have seven sons,' says the mother-in-law when the new bride enters her husband's home. 'If husband and son are alive the world is full,' says a Maratha woman, in whose home dwell eight robust young men. 'If one of them is dead the world is half empty.'

Bless us with a son.

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* #5 - p. 69, 70

Yet we know from the research we have been doing that there are innumerable children who are working today, with the sanction of the local government, in extremely hazardous industries, dealing with sulphur in the match industry, dealing with cyanide – dipping their hands into it – in the brass industry and the glass industry. Government is very alert to this problem, but they say that if we ban child labour it will be a disadvantage to the families themselves.

In spite of the evolution which has undoubtedly taken place, the barbaric practice of forcing children to beg does still survive. 'There are beggar-lords,

Child labor.

* #15 - p. 66, 67

Article 24 of the Indian constitution stipulated that "no child must work in a factory or mine, nor be employed in any other dangerous place." For reasons of profit and docility, however, a large proportion of the work force was extremely young. In fact, a child was almost always hired in preference to an adult. His little fingers were more adept and he was content with a pittance as a salary. Yet these pittances earned by children with so much pride meant so often the difference between their family's starvation and survival!

The workers in the slum were among the worst protected in the world. They were not eligible for any social security; they were often shamelessly exploited, working up to twelve or fourteen hours at a stretch in premises in which no zoo in the world would dare to keep its animals. Many of them ate and slept on the spot, without light or ventilation. For them there were no weekends or vacations. One day's absence and they could find themselves laid off. A misplaced remark, a claim, a dispute, being one hour late, could mean instant dismissal and without compensation. Only those who managed to acquire some form of qualification (as a turner, a laminator, expert press operator) had any real hope of keeping their jobs.

Article 24.

* #8 - p. 253

The rule of modesty applies both to men and women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman is a breach of refinement. Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only good form, it is not for the good of the weaker sex but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex. The need for modesty is the same both in men and women.' That is in English.

'Why so many children?' I ask, as a trail of unkempt, unwashed children circles me.

'Can anyone stop nature? It is God who gives and God who takes. To tamper with one's body is against the word of God,' says the woman.

Why then did she pierce her nose, her ears, and have her sons circumcised? Did that not amount to tampering with the body?

'But sterilization is another matter,' she rejoins. 'It amounts to killing life.'

'*Azal*, or *coitus interuptus*, was practised even in the days of the Prophet, and at a time when the Koran was being revealed to him,' I tell her. 'The Prophet and his four Caliphs advocated *azal*.'

Modesty/birth control.

* #5 - p. 33

URBAN

RURAL:

DESCRIPTION OF LIFE

INDIA IS A LAND OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF VILLAGES ALL LOOKING THE SAME AS THEY DID THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO. VILLAGE INDIA IS AN INDIA TIME IMMEMORIAL. MUD BRICK WALLS ISOLATING THE INDIVIDUAL FROM HIS FELLOW VILLAGER, BUT, AS WELL, ACTING AS A BARRIER TO THE 21ST CENTURY.

URBAN INDIA, LIKE THE OLD ADAGE ABOUT "HOW YA GONNA KEEP HIM DOWN ON THE FARM ONCE HE'S SEEN PAREE," SEES THE INFLUX OF IMPOVERISHED RURAL FAMILIES DAILY. THESE PEOPLE, FILLED WITH HOPE, SETTLE IMMEDIATELY INTO A SQUALOR THAT IS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF OUR IMAGINATION - A CARDBOARD BOX TOWN COVERED BY LEAF BAG ROOFS SETTLED NEXT TO NEW HI-RISES. CITIES WHOSE INFRASTRUCTURE ARE COLLAPSING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ITS EXPENDING CITIZENRY. DISEASE ABOUNDS IN THE STAGNANT, URINE SMELLING POOLS. UNDERDRESSED, OVERWORKED PEASANTS WHO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF ALWAYS BEING NEAR DEATH'S DOOR - ARE THE DOWNSIDE VIEW OF BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA.

STILL THESE CITIES EXHIBIT A VITALITY, A GROWTH AS INDIA MOVES TWO STEPS FORWARD AND ONE PLUS STEP BACK.

Gandhiji once said, "If the village perishes, India will perish. It will be no more India."*

* #16 - p. 273

About three quarters of India's people earn their living from the land. There are thousands of wealthy farmers; but many millions eke out a living on scraps of land, utterly at the mercy of the weather, with nothing to fall back on. There are others, perhaps 150 million, who have no land at all and who depend on landlords for paltry wages. Country life can seem, and no doubt can be for those with a reasonable holding and income, rhythmic and satisfying. But for millions of Indians village life may be brutal and anxious and violent, with its strong emphasis on caste, its poverty, frustrated hopes and the ill treatment of the weak by the strong.

Seventy-five per cent are farmers.

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* #2 - p. 166

Our forefathers hid themselves from a covetous world behind mud walls. We do the same. Barriers are no longer needed as protection against cruel raiders. But they are needed against those ruthless ones who come to extort. For the old purpose, our fathers built their walls strong enough to shut out the enemy, and made them of earth so that they might be inconspicuous. For the present purpose they must remain inconspicuous and yet be high enough to conceal us and our possessions from the greedy ones. But now they are better protection if instead of being kept strong they are allowed to become dilapidated. Dilapidation makes it harder for the covetous visitor to tell who is actually poor and who simulates proverty. When men become so strong that the agents of authority work with them for their mutual benefit, they dare to expose their prosperity in walls of better materials and workmanship. But if the ordinary man suddenly makes his will conspicuous, the extortioner is on his trail.*

Behind mud walls.

* #16 - p. 120

We do not trust the outside world, and we are suspicious of each other. Our lives are oppressed by mean fears. We fear the rent collector, we fear the police watchman, we fear everyone who looks as though he might claim some authority over us; we fear our creditors, we fear our patrons, we fear too much rain, we fear locusts, we fear thieves, we fear the evil spirits which threaten our children and our animals, and we fear the strength of our neighbor. Do you wonder that we unite the strength of brothers and sons?

Lack of trust.

When the cattle come home in the evening, our village lanes are transformed into stables. City visitors who go through the village with us at this hour step gingerly over streams of urine and piles of dung while picking their precarious way around and behind munching buffaloes and bullocks. After dark, when nights are cold, the animals are led into the cattle room, the front room of every farm house. If the men of the family have no room for themselves apart from the courtyard where the women stay, they sleep on their rope-strung cots or beds of straw, among the cattle. On suffocating summer nights, both master and animals sleep in the lane outside the door.

The farmer is more with his bullocks than with the human members of his family. He takes for granted that if we are ready to nurse his wife and children in times of illness, we will give the same care to his animals. When a cow is the only cow and a pair of bullocks are the only bullocks a family owns and when they occupy the front room or share the family courtyard, they are distinctly members of the household. We have tried to accustom ourselves to their importance

Cattle come home.

When we refer to the "houses" of the village, we are using the term loosely. Actually they are enclosures, incorporating more than a house. The women of the family live and work within the enclosure, surrounded by the children. The men return to it at night. In the first room inside the door are the cow or buffalo and the oxen. The sheep and goats of the shepherds are within their enclosures, as are the swine of the sweepers. Farmers keep their implements and artisans keep their tools in the stable, the courtyard, or workroom. If the family lives by a craft, the workroom is somewhere within the enclosure. Grain from the family land, or received from *jajmans*, is stored away in a special stone-lined granary or in the large clay jars made by the women and kept in a storeroom. Other food supplies are stored in jars of various sizes made by the potter and suspended from the ceiling. *Ghi* and other treasured luxuries are likewise in baked-clay containers stowed away in large, padlocked chests. Clothes are stored in similar chests. Gold or silver in the form of ornaments or coins, is deposited in a secret place in one of the walls or the floor. There are no windows through which outsiders might peer, and no man enters the enclosure of another unless attended by one of the men of the household. The walls of those who have much to protect are high and thick. Those of families with little are low and often neglected. This is as it has been, as far back as anyone can remember.

Our village houses are exposed to whatever the season brings.

In cold weather we shiver most of the day and are chilled through, morning and evening. It is as cold indoors as out. Everyone complains, but accepts the continual discomfort. The only possible escape from the raw chill is to dance and jump as the children do, bundle up head and ears as the men do, find a patch of sunshine to sit in or work in during the middle of the day, sit close to a short-lived fire of stalks, or wrap up in a heavy cotton quilt at night.

Hot weather is even more relentless. There is no escaping it. Courtyards get the full blaze of the sun. A bit of thatch in a corner slightly modifies the heat. Storerooms are suffocating. Curtains, if we had them, would only shut out the air and make rooms even more stifling. I had intended to have curtains in two doors of our big room. During three years absence, I had forgotten how important any breath of moving air can be. And still further, I had forgotten that children, unused to curtains, push them out of the way with grubby hands or use them for various unintended purposes. A curtain is just another piece of cloth conveniently located. Better an open doorway, to catch any breeze, however dustladen, and keep scraps of old cloth for practical uses. The one place where men find a little relief in May and June is under a large tree out in the open. Here they catch every breeze that stirs and are protected from the sun which seems bent on destroying man, beast, and all growing things.

Inside the houses which I know best, the surroundings are so familiar that I could almost tell blindfolded where certain implements are kept, where the feeding troughs are for the cows, buffaloes, or oxen, where the cooking space is located, where the doors to the different storerooms are, and what will be found in each storeroom. I know where the women sleep, in cold weather and in hot, and where the men and animals sleep. Furnishings still consist of rope-strung cots, and perhaps a low square stool with a seat of woven tape. The cots are light, with legs and frame of light wood, and rope serving

as springs. They can be lifted easily and moved from storeroom to courtyard or courtyard to stable. Everything in the house is easily moved, except for the grinding stone and the cooking fireplace. If there are not enough cots for all the family, some sleep on the ground in the long hot season or on a thick padding of rice straw in winter weather. Bedding consists of cotton quilts for cold nights or homespun sheets as the weather grows warmer and nothing when it is hot. Life is truly simple. There are no windows to polish, no beds to make, no dishes or glassware or cutlery to wash, no curtains to launder, no rugs to clean, no furniture to dust. There is a table in the postmaster's house, and chairs—regarded as a mark of prestige—in two or three others. But most people say why invest in tables, unless someone in the family is obliged to write. And why use chairs when the ground is perfectly comfortable—much more so than sitting with legs dangling over the edge of a chair.

Throughout the village, families still seem to prefer to live beside others of their own caste, if possible. There are a few exceptions, but where several families belong to one caste, they will ordinarily be found in adjacent houses. The shep-

* #16 - p. 144, 145, 146

"In our family we consume about twenty pounds of flour each day. This may be wheat, corn, or millet. If there is to be rice, it must be pounded in the stone cup set into the courtyard floor by two of the women, each armed with a three-foot club with iron-bound pounding end. They bring their clubs down in rhythm, careful to miss the club of the other and the hand pushing the rice back into the cup. If there is to be a cooked pulse, it must be split between stones lighter than those for flour, and soaked before cooking. The cow or buffalo must be milked, and the milk simmered over a low fire of dung cakes. Dung must be collected, shaped into fuel cakes, and plastered against a sunny wall or smooth piece of ground. The milk of the day before has been clabbered over night and must be churned. The butter is stored until there is enough to clarify for *ghi*, which is then put away in clay jars with great care. The *chula* (small stove) must be freshly mud-plastered each morning and allowed to dry before it may be used. The courtyard must be swept morning and evening. Vegetables in season must be brought from the fields and prepared for cooking. Spices are ground fresh for each meal on a small stone slab with a stone roller. Meals must be cooked and kept ready for the men as they come in, one by one, and the children must be fed. If there is any free time, it is spent in ginning cotton or in spinning. They still seem to do everything the hardest way possible. Manual labor costs nothing. And labor-saving devices are unknown or frowned upon as luxuries."

Food for thought.

* #16 - p. 148

smokeless *chula*." The familiar *chula* is the low, horseshoe-shaped cooking fireplace, just large enough to support a griddle or sauce-pan. In our village every *chula* is kept ceremonially clean, with a fresh coating of clay paste each morning. Its chief drawback is that it lacks a chimney and the smoke pours out into the face of the woman doing the cooking. Rural workers have been trying for some time to devise a *chula* which will remove the smoke and still be acceptable.

Chula.

* #16 - p. 203

It was difficult to imagine any Indian sufficiently debased to can beef and bacon indiscriminately; it was equally difficult to imagine Hindus and Muslims both working under the same roof, each, in one another's eyes, committing sacrilege. Did they, I wondered, have separate production lines or did they spit ritually in each tin before sealing it, in order to square themselves with their respective gods?

For the inhabitants of India have a simple genius for concocting exasperating situations which, however long he may have lived in the country and however much he may have anticipated them, burst on the victim each time with pristine force. One of the pre-requisites of real exasperation is that there should be no one to vent one's anger on, and there was no one.

Sitting in the bus we saw little of the countryside on the way from Garhmuktesar to Moradabad. In the same way as what are now laughingly called "eye-level grills", the windows were set so low that they seemed to have been intended either for children or for dwarfs, and it was only by crouching down in a furtive attitude and squinting that it was possible to see the villages of brown mud as we flashed past and the fields of young wheat in which isolated palm trees grew, or rather had grown, because most of them were dead and leafless, standing in the plain like giant sticks of asparagus. The bus stopped frequently and every time it did Wanda got out and sought refuge behind the nearest tree or, if the stop was in a village, in places that, according to her, were each more loathsome than the last one. Each time she did so she had to struggle against a tide of beggars, mostly toothless old women, who boarded the bus against the streams of descending passengers, rattling tin cans which contained infinitesimal amounts of paise.

Whatever.

* #11 - p. 55, 48, 122

take place. From April to mid-May the villagers would thresh it – first it would be trodden out by six bullocks yoked together moving round and round a central post; then it would be winnowed and a cake of cow dung placed on top of the heaped grain to avert the evil eye. In June or July, after the monsoon rains had begun, the Kharif crop would be sown – rice, maize and millets; and in early October there would be the harvest and then the land would be ploughed and the Rabi would be sown once more. Another important crop, not here but in irrigated land, was sugar cane, now more important than cotton. The land in which it was to be planted might need as many as twenty ploughings before it was ready to receive it, lots of manure and constant weeding. This was the cycle in the State of Uttar Pradesh in the Ganges Plain. Floods, drought, blight, pestilence, the incursion of wild animals into the standing crops, any of these might destroy them and often did. They might fail from lack of fertilisers or the land might fail from excessive cropping; or because the sub-division of the property between all the sons made it impossible to farm it economically. This was the law of inheritance carried to the ultimate limits of absurdity; by it the individual holding might be reduced to the size of the back yard of a slum property. But whatever happened to it this was the cycle and had been for two thousand years.

Cycle of farming.

* #11 - p. 33

Generation followed generation quickly here, men as easily replaceable as their huts of grass and mud and matting (golden when new, quickly weathering to grey-black). Cruelty no longer had a meaning; it was life itself. Men knew what they were born to. Every man knew his caste, his place; each group lived in its own immemorially defined area; and the pariahs, the scavengers, lived at the end of the village. Above the huts rose the rambling two storey brick mansion of the family who had once owned it all, the land and the people: grandeur that wasn't grandeur, but was like part of the squalor and defeat out of which it had arisen. The family was now partially dispossessed, but, as politicians, they still controlled. Nothing had changed or seemed likely to change.

And during the rest of that day's drive North Bihar repeated itself: the grey-black hut clusters; the green paddy fields whose luxuriance and springlike freshness can deceive earth-scanners and cause yields to be overestimated; the bare-backed men carrying loads on either end of a long limber pole balanced on their shoulders, the strain showing in their brisk, mincing walk, which gave them a curious feminine daintiness; the overcrowded buses at dusty towns that were shack settlements, the children wallowing in the muddy ponds in the heat of the day, catching fish; the children and the men pounding soaked jute stalks to extract the fibre which, loaded on bullock carts, looked like thick plaited blond tresses, immensely rich. Thoughts of human possibility dwindled: North Bihar seemed to have become the world, capable only of the life that was seen.

Men replacing men - immemorial.

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* #10 - p. 28, 29

Once upon a time, the journalist said, the Indian village was self-sufficient and well ordered. The bull drew the plough and the cow gave milk and the manure of these animals enriched the fields, and the stalks of the abundant harvest fed the animals and thatched the village huts. That was the good time. But self-sufficiency hadn't lasted, because after a while there were too many people. 'It isn't an easy thing to say,' the journalist said, 'but this is where kindness to the individual can be cruelty to the race.'

Every open space was a latrine; and in one such space we came, suddenly, upon a hellish vision. Two starved Bombay street cows had been tethered there, churning up human excrement with their own; and now, out of this bog, they were being pulled away by two starved women, to neighbourhood shouts, the encouraging shouts of a crowd gathering around this scene of isolated, feeble frenzy, theatre in the round on an excremental stage, the frightened cows and frantic starveling women (naked skin and bone below their disordered, tainted saris) sinking with every step and tug. The keeping of cows was illegal here, and an inspector of some sort was reported to be coming. A recurring drama: the cows – illegal, but the only livelihood of the women who kept them – had often to be hidden; and they were going to be hidden now, if they could be got away in time, in the rooms where the women lived.

The lane twisted; the scene was left behind. We were going down the other side of the hill now, and were soon in an area where a committee ruled. We passed through an open space, a little square. The committees were determined to keep these open areas, the technician said; but that required vigilance. A squatter's hut could go up overnight, and it was hard then – since all the huts were illegal – to have just that one pulled down. Once, when the tech-

The great outdoors - an open latrine.

* #10 - p. 68, 70

The back door of the kitchen opened onto the back yard, and we were in the bright sun again, in the dust, at the edge of the village, the rocky land stretching away. As so often in India, order, even fussiness, had ended with the house itself. The back yard was heaped with this and that, and scattered about with bits and pieces of household things that had been thrown out but not quite abandoned. But even here there were things to show. Just a few steps from the back door was a well, the Patel's own, high-walled, with a newly concreted base, and with a length of rope hanging from a weighted pole, a trimmed and peeled tree branch. A rich man indeed, this Patel, to have his own well! No need for him to buy water from the restaurant man and waste grain on *chapattis* no one wanted. And the Patel had something else no one in the village had: an outhouse, a latrine! There it was, a safe distance away. No need for him or any member of his family to crouch in the open! It was like extravagance, and we stood and marvelled.

The landless labourers he employed (out somewhere in his fields now) were his servants; many had been born his servants. He acknowledged certain obligations to them. He would lend them money so that they could marry off their daughters with appropriate ceremony; in times of distress they knew that they could turn to him; in times of famine they knew they had a claim on the grain in his house. Their debts would wind around them and never end, and would be passed on to their children. But to have a Master was to be in some way secure. To be untied was to run the risk of being lost.

And the Patel was progressive. He was a good farmer. It was improved farming (and the absence of tax on agricultural income) that had made him a rich man. And he welcomed new ways. Not everyone in his position was like that. There were villages, the engineer said later, when we were on the highway again, which couldn't be included in the irrigation scheme because the big landowners there didn't like the idea of a lot of people making more money.

After two decades of effort and investment simple things had arrived, but were still superfluous to daily life, answered no established needs. Electric light, ready water, an outhouse: the Patel was the only man in the village to possess them all, and only the water would have been considered strictly necessary. Everything else was still half for show, proof of the Patel's position, the extraordinariness which yet, fearing the gods, he took care to hide in his person, in the drabness and anonymity of his peasant appearance.

Patel's home.

* #10 - p. 82, 86, 87

The signs in Amritsar Station (THIRD-CLASS EXIT, SECOND-CLASS LADIES' WAITING ROOM, FIRST-CLASS TOILET, SWEEPERS ONLY) had given me a formal idea of Indian society. The less formal reality I saw at seven in the morning in the Northern Railways Terminal in Old Delhi. To understand the real India, the Indians say, you must go to the villages. But that is not strictly true, because the Indians have carried their villages to the railway stations. In the daytime it is not apparent – you might mistake any of these people for beggars, ticketless travellers (sign: TICKETLESS TRAVEL IS A SOCIAL EVIL), or unlicensed hawkers. At night and in the early morning the station village is complete, a community so preoccupied that the thousands of passengers arriving and departing leave it undisturbed: they detour around it. The railway dwellers possess the station, but only the new arrival notices this. He feels something is wrong because he has not learned the Indian habit of ignoring the obvious, making a detour to preserve his calm. The newcomer cannot believe he has been plunged into such intimacy so soon. In another country this would all be hidden from him, and not even a trip to a village would reveal with this clarity the pattern of life. The village in rural India tells the visitor very little except that he is required to keep his distance and limit his experience of the place to tea or a meal in a stuffy parlour. The life of the village, its interior, is denied to him.

But the station village is all interior, and the shock of this exposure made me hurry away. I didn't feel I had any right to watch people bathing under a low faucet – naked among the incoming tide of office workers; men sleeping late on their *charpoys* or tucking up their turbans; women with nose rings and cracked yellow feet cooking stews of begged vegetables over smoky fires, suckling infants, folding bedrolls; children pissing on their toes; little girls, in oversized frocks falling from their shoulders, fetching water in tin cans from the third-class toilet; and, near a newspaper vendor, a man lying on his back, holding a baby up to admire and tickling it. Hard work, poor pleasures, and the scrimmage of appetite. This village has no walls. I distracted myself with the signs, GWALIOR SUITINGS, RASHMI SUPERB COATINGS, and the film poster of plump faces that was never out of view, BOBBY ('A Story of Modern Love').

A railroad station.

* #13 - p. 114, 115

The windowless front that this village presented to the world seemed to be a symbol of the inhabitants: turned in upon themselves by its very layout, as if in a hall of mirrors; still, in spite of legislation, inhibited by consideration of caste; still, in spite of legislation, the victims of moneylenders paying off their never-to-be discharged debts at an interest of anything up to 25 per cent; desiccated by the summer sun;

ploughing through a Passchendaele of mud in the rainy season; creeping into the fields to put out a black pot to ward off the evil eye. Poor ignorant people, living on a knife-edge between survival and disaster.

A windowless front.

Delhi, however, did not by any means escape the great heat of summer, which most assumed meant changing your clothes four times a day. The dust could be fearful. When the ice-pits were used up, and the country was panting for rain, and the mosquitoes were at their worst, drinks had to be 'cooled' with saltpetre, and tatties, blinds of dampened grass and bamboo, had to be fixed to doors and windows to keep out the dust. Samuel Sneade-Brown, who became Charles's colleague and friend at the Residency, wrote home in the month of June:

> The weather is now in its glory; the only time in the day in which it is possible to stir out of one's house is between five and six in the morning, and at seven in the evening, when it is almost dark. All nature languishes. Imagine yourself placed in front of a huge oven, and a large bellows introduced at the opposite end, so as to puff the heated vapour in your face . . . I am obliged to have the punkah, or large fan fixed to the ceiling, moving night and day.

But such heat, as Charles said to his mother, was 'nothing' to him, and did not interfere with his work. Like Sneade-Brown he also had plenty of servants to wait on him: a valet to dress and undress him, bathe him and rub him down, a butler, two men to wait at table, a water-carrier, a sweeper or 'menial servant' for the thunder box, six grooms, and six bearers for the palanquin. Delhi for Europeans had a reputation for being very hospitable, though there was a dearth of young women. The wives of the Delhi officers were unkindly known as the Painted Corpses.

Six pages of Delhi - some delights.

* #14 - p. 141, 142

The capital is unhappily situated in the world's flight schedules so that many airliners arrive and leave when life and hope are at their lowest ebb.

She squats in some sand near the clanking concrete mixer and draws the child to her breast. After he has fed she wipes his face and backside, hands him back to the small minder and returns to the rhythm of the line. She picks up her basket, has it filled at the concrete mixer, fixes it on a pad on her head and walks in the file of people up a crude plank ramp to dump the load, descending another ramp to fill the basket once again. It is building by the teaspoonful. There are cranes, bulldozers, pile-drivers and other machines, but Delhi, and indeed much of India, is developed in this ant-like fashion.

These people, too, are part of Delhi's rhythm, just like the indefatigable female coolies digging trenches, humping sand, breaking stones like convicts in a quarry, hauling bricks and bearing concrete, side by side with their men in the equality of weariness, helping to build Delhi with their bare hands. The work is hard and unrelenting and on hot days it is punishing; their suffering shows in faces which do not stay young or pretty for long.

* #2 - p. 133, 134

According to statistics Delhi is the most dangerous city in the world for road users. Traffic is anarchic and rules are readily broken. In practice the roads of India are lawless. Drivers plunge into roundabouts and change lanes without slowing or looking to right, to left, or in their mirrors. They stare fixedly ahead, taking no interest in what is happening on their beam, their quarters or in their wake. At night their vehicles are usually unlit. Passengers and drivers stick their arms out of the windows making flapping, desperate, pleading signals, so that from behind a car often seems like some monstrous flightless bird trying to get airborne.

Bicycles and scooters are often ridden against the flow of traffic. Scooter rickshaws, not much bigger than a royal prince's pram, appear head-on in your lane. When hit they roll and bounce like misshapen balls, passengers falling out like laundry. Ice cream carts are hauled the wrong way round roundabouts, and on the broad avenues drivers make a third or fourth lane while overtaking, keeping the horn ring firmly depressed. In India a man with a broken klaxon considers himself a form of eunuch.

Indian women are intrepid. They perch sidesaddle on the pillions of scooters and motorcycles, a babe or two in their arms, their saris waving in the warm slipstream, unconcernedly taking the risk of being throttled like Isadora Duncan.

Buses and lorries race at high speed, with compressed air horns screaming, as if they were fire engines on their way to a disaster. The lorries are overloaded and sway dangerously. The suspension of the buses has broken under the weight of passengers so that when negotiating a roundabout they lean drunkenly and the bodywork makes a shower of sparks as it scrapes the road.

These vehicles often crash. Many are badly maintained and overloaded, owned by cynical men and driven by picaroons and

callous oafs, sometimes drunk, often unlicensed and untrained. They have fatalistic ideas of risk and rely on bullying and bulk to get their way.

That is the law of the jungle. But all of us detour around the inanely wandering cows and aldermanic elephants.

We have to find our way through a bobbing flotsam. There are creaking carts drawn by bullocks, black buffaloes, horses and camels, the last a reminder of how close the capital is to the desert. There are two-wheeled carts laden with furniture, filing cabinets, boxes and smuggled video machines, pushed and pulled by two or three men. Cycle rickshaws, often heartlessly overloaded with people or loads of paper, or armchairs, or steel rods, are propelled by men with knotty calves.

Black and yellow taxis, well up in the hierarchy, shoulder aside rickshaws and wobbling bicycles, and riding in one often seems like taking part in a stock car race.

Taxis in Delhi live in small herds under the shelter of roadside trees, and their nonchalant drivers, many of them Punjabis, rig up an awning, set up their charpoys, light a fire and build a hut for the telephone. They live like the front line fighter pilots they seek to emulate, in and around their machines, tinkering and dozing, waiting to scramble. Some of these encampments have a tap under which the drivers soap and bathe themselves and comb and pile up their hair and rewind their turbans. The telephone rings and a taxi lurches like a crocodile from the kerb, into the stream of

traffic, its driver, intent on his prey, looking neither left, right or behind, leaving his safety in the hands of supernatural forces. His insurance policy, a postcard picture of a god, is taped to the dashboard.

* #2 - p. 135, 136

THE FLEETING, savoured spring of the plains of northern India has almost passed and we shall soon be in the furnace, meek subjects of the sun. Along Delhi's broad boulevards the trees have suddenly greened and spread into parasols. The first of the season's water carts are being wheeled on the cracked and betel-stained pavements, the nation's cuspidor. A glass of chilled water is less than a halfpenny. In the old part of the city, where pungent spicy smells linger in the narrow secret streets, the traditional water sellers hump leaking goatskin bags on their backs and squirt water into little tin cups. Customers swill and toss coins into the sellers' marsupial pouches. There will soon be times when I shall envy the ice men: they strap large blocks of ice beneath their bicycle saddles with hairy string and know the pleasure of cool buttocks on roasting days.

The garden is bright with snapdragons, roses, dahlias, daisies, hibiscus and bougainvillea, flamboyant as a matador's cape. Bulbuls, with jaunty Robin Hood caps, red cheeks and red underwear are contesting the lime tree with sparrows. Mynahs have bursts of communal violence, or stride self-importantly up and down, shrieking like politicians in parliament. On the wall doves gaze into each other's eyes. Lizards are out scouting, signallers of summer. A little way off, an elephant proceeds on his lawful occasions with stately stride, the bell swinging beneath his middle donging like the call to evensong heard across a meadow.

Outside there is a dusty road, its edges swept by women forever bent over their stiff brushes in the attitude of Millet's gleaners. Cooks bicycle by with their shopping baskets, flitting bee-like from market to market, from meat to fish to fruit to cheese to vegetables, ordering chickens off to instant execution. Shopping can be a complex operation. There are no supermarkets; nor, one imagines, will there ever be, for they would be so much against the Indian grain of small and intimate family businesses and little shoulder-rubbing shops grouped together in like trades. Across the road is a maidan, the village green of this neighbourhood, surrounded on three sides by houses and tall trees. Some boys are playing cricket on it, and it is a serious affair, with the batsmen looking pukka in pads. I ought to move inside to avoid being brained by a six. There is an evocative smell of newly cut grass, which for me always means cricket. The maidan was cut this morning by a mower drawn by an ox, and now the beast is grazing up in one corner while the mower-wallah dozes under a tree.

There must be a dozen men in white dhotis slumbering in patches of shade, and out in the sun a group of women in red and green saris, servants and the wives of servants, sit in a circle with their small children, talking and laughing.

Strolling schoolgirls in white dresses, their shiny hair in thick plaits, lick ice cream cornets bought at the shop around the corner. That place is a magnet: every evening the little piazza in front of it is crowded with men, women and children sucking ice cream and popping sweet and sticky things into their mouths with dripping fingers. It is a carefree congregation, lapping at the evening waterhole of sugary indulgence. Indians love sweets and the price of sugar is politically sensitive. The children have white mouths and splashed shirts, the women have desired rolls of waistline fat which wobble as they chatter like jolly parrots. Fastened to their waists, and jingling in concert with the wobbling, are the keys to their houses, refrigerators, jewellery boxes, money drawers and whiskey cupboards. The men stand with their ice cream or plates of sweetmeats, talking about cricket or absent in reverie. They are oblivious to the confusion and jam they have caused in the road by their inconsiderate parking. Indians do not park: they arrive and stop – and what happens around them is someone else's problem. In the road there is rage, gesticulation and scratched bodywork, but in the piazza of sugary peace and closed ears it is of no concern as tongues lovingly carve ice cream cones into periwinkles.

There is a group of men lolling on the maidan grass, wearing

* #2 - p. 128, 129

Many of their labourers are what are known as 'bonded'. This means they are so heavily indebted that they and their families can never leave the contractor's employment. The contractors bribe the officials to get contracts; the officials then turn a blind eye to the workers' pay and conditions.

On the edge of Delhi, there are quarries where workers choke on the dust thrown up by dilapidated stone-crushers. They handle sharp-edged rocks without gloves; they have no goggles to protect their eyes from the chips which fly off their chisels, and no helmets to protect their heads from falling rocks. Their appalling conditions have been the subject of several debates in Parliament only fifteen miles away; but for all the crocodile tears shed by Members of Parliament nothing has changed. Inder Mohan is a social worker who is campaigning for the quarry workers.

> There is no sanitation at all; they all have to defecate in the open somewhere. In the morning, children defecate opposite their huts. The huts are made of some sort of bricks, but not all of them are even made entirely of bricks. Their roofs are hardly roofs. The huts have to be made by the labourers at their own cost. They don't have much money, so they only start building their huts when the contractor advances them money. From that time onwards, they are right under his thumb, because once they borrow money from him there is no hope for them. They cannot run away because the contractor here who brings them from the village knows the money-lender there. He knows the police official there, he knows the politician there, and he knows their counterparts in the city here.

The contractor also does his best to see that his workers become addicted to the illicit liquor all too easily available in the neighbourhood.

* #15 - p. 64, 65

It is a city designed for those who seek not bread, but green trees and boulevards, the good life and adventure. For the majority it remains a place of shelter where they live and perpetuate the only life they know, that of the open country.

Even a fashionable suburb of large homes, where televisions blare in front rooms and gods sit appeased in back rooms, finds it difficult to turn away the milkman's wife. For she stands for an unspoken belief that lies hidden in every Indian woman. A belief in the supernatural nurtured more by fear than faith, a part of the sub-conscious rooted in centuries. Wandering *sadhus*, palmists, *pundits* claiming *tantric* powers, peasants leading a decorated Nandi bull that predicts men's futures with a nod of its grave head, make their seasonal forays into the city and are welcomed by god-fearing wives and mothers. Women continue to bow to folk wisdom which they revere and return to in the times of stress and anxiety generated in a city, which despite its links with the encircling countryside, has failed to create a harmony that integrates.

I live in a suburb that has claims to being rich, fashionable and safe. It is made up of large white bungalows and well-kept gardens; but back doors open into streets where dumps of garbage lie, where dogs scrounge and children of migrant workers play and cry. The children's mothers, dressed in bright coloured skirts and veils, carry bricks on their heads; their fathers raise walls of brick and cement; the neighbourhood is oblivious of their ragged presence. Their homes are *jhuggis* that appear one night and disappear another. Even the less transient work force, that keeps the suburb alive, hails from villages far and near. My *dhobi* comes from a village near Gorakhpur, my milkman from Dum Dum Jheel in Haryana, my servant from the hills of Almora where his family grows everything they need except salt, my gardener from a *basti* on the banks of the Jamuna (that floods once every few years and washes away his mother's house), my *pan-wala*, in the neighbourhood market, from a district near Varanasi where three generations of his family have done nothing but make and serve *pan*. Vendors who make their morning rounds of the suburb come from surrounding villages bringing vegetables, fruits and wares that have the flavour of the earth. Some return as the day descends. Others recede into fragile shelters on the edges of well-appointed colonies, curl into the dark, and reappear the next day as fresh as a new morning. The city has not yet seared their soul. For they have not really entered it.

* #5 - p. 84, 85

Down where we were on the waterfront, limbless beggars moved like crabs across the stones; on the offshore island which was joined to the land by a pair of ornamental bridges, non-ritual bathers, intent only on getting clean, soaped themselves all over before lowering themselves into the stream; men wearing head-cloths swept downriver on tiny rafts of brushwood supported by hollow gourds; large, silvery cows excreted sacred excrement, contributing their mite to the sanctity of the place; while on the river front the nais, the barbers, regarded by the orthodox as indispensable but unclean, were still engaged in ritual hair-cutting under their lean-to sheds of corrugated iron, shaving heads, nostrils and ears, preparing their customers for the bath. The wind was still cold; it bore the smell of burning dung, mingled with the scent of flowers, sandalwood and other unidentifiable odours. Everything was bathed in a brilliant, eleven o'clock-light. It was an exciting, pleasant scene.

Reluctantly, because it seemed unlikely that we would ever see them again, we gave up our sandals to an attendant at the entrance to the bathing place, who filed them away out of sight in what resembled the cloakroom of a decrepit opera house, and went down the steps to the sacred pools past touts and well-fed custodians who were squatting on platforms under huge umbrellas which were straining in the wind, and which threatened to lift them and their platforms into the air and dump them in the river. All three of us were wearing the costume of the country; Wanda and myself in the fond hope of diminishing the interest of the inhabitants in us. For G., there was no need of such subterfuge; he was one of them already.

The City of Joy - an oxymoron - 4 pages.

* #11 - p. 33

IN WINTER, the same phenomenon occurred each evening. No sooner had the women set fire to the cow dung cakes to cook their dinner than the reddening disk of the sun disappeared behind a grayish filter. Held there by the layer of fresh air above, the wreaths of dense smoke hovered stagnantly over the rooftops, imprisoning the slum beneath a poisonous screen. Its inhabitants coughed, spat, and choked. On some evenings, visibility was reduced to less than six feet. The smell of sulphur overrode all others. People's skin and eyes burned. Yet no one in the City of Joy would have dared to curse the wintertime, that all too short a respite before the summer's onslaught.

Summer, that year, struck like a bolt of lightning. In a matter of seconds, night fell in the very middle of day. Crazed with panic, the slum people rushed out of their compounds and into the alleys. From the terrace where he was sorting medicines, Stephan Kovalski saw an atmospheric disturbance of a kind that was totally unknown to him. At first sight it could have passed for the Aurora Borealis. What it in fact consisted of was a wall of suspended particles of yellow sand bearing down upon the slum with lightning speed. There was no time to take shelter. The tornado had already reached them.

It devastated everything in its path, tearing off the roofs of houses and tossing their occupants to the ground. In their sheds the cow buffalo bellowed with terror. The slum was instantly covered with a shroud of yellow dust. Then a succession of flashes lit the darkness, the signal for a cataclysm which this time bombarded the slum with hailstones succeeded by a torrential downpour of

rain. When finally the rain stopped and the sun came out again, a cloud of burning vapor descended over the slum. The thermometer rose from fifteen degrees to a hundred and four degrees Fahrenheit. Stephan Kovalski and the seventy thousand other inhabitants of the City of Joy realized that the short winter truce was over. The blazing inferno was with them once more. That March 17, summer had come to the city.

Summer! That beloved season of all temperate zones inflicted upon the occupants of this part of the world unimaginable suffering and, as always, it was the most destitute people, the miserable slum dwellers, who were most cruelly stricken by it. In the windowless hovels crammed with up to fifteen people, in those tiny compounds scorched for twelve hours a day by the sun, in the narrow alleys where never the slightest breath disturbed the air, while extreme poverty and the absence of electricity prevented the use of fans, the summer months that preceded the arrival of the monsoon were as atrocious a form of torture as hunger itself.

In the avenues of Calcutta people simply did not move without the protection of an umbrella. Even the policemen directing traffic were equipped with linen shades attached to their crossbelts, so as to leave their hands free. Other people sheltered themselves from the sun beneath attaché cases, wads of newspaper, piles of books, the tails of their saris or *dhotis* raised over their heads. The furnace-like heat was accompanied by humidity that could sometimes reach 100 percent. The least movement, a few steps, going up a staircase, induced a shower of perspiration. From ten o'clock in the morning on, any physical effort became impossible. Men and beasts found themselves petrified in the incandescence of the unmoving air. Not a breath stirred. The reflection off the walls of the buildings was so bright that anyone imprudent enough to go out without dark glasses was liable to a sensation of melted lead in his eyes. Venturing barefoot onto the asphalt of the streets was even more painful. The liquified tar scorched strips of flesh from the soles of the feet. Pulling a rickshaw on this fiery carpet was an act of pure heroism—running, stopping, setting off again with wheels that stuck fast in the burning tar. To try and protect his feet already ulcerated with cracks and burns, Hasari Pal resolved to wear a pair of sandals, an act which millions of barefooted Indians had never accomplished. Thus for the first time in his life, Hasari put on the beautiful pair of sandals received in his wife's dowry on the occasion of his marriage. His initiative was to prove disastrous. The sandals parted company with his feet at the first patch of burning asphalt, sucked off by the melting tar

Anand Nagar, "City of Joy." Since then the jute factory had closed its doors, but the original workers' estate had expanded to become a veritable city within a city. By now more than seventy thousand inhabitants had congregated on an expanse of ground hardly three times the size of a football field. That included some ten thousand families divided up geographically according to their various religious creeds. Sixty-three percent of them were Muslims, 37 percent Hindus, with here and there little islands of Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Buddhists.

With its compounds of low houses constructed around minute courtyards, its red-tiled roofs, and its rectilinear alleyways, the City of Joy did indeed look more like an industrial suburb than a shanty-town. Nevertheless it boasted a sad record—it had the densest concentration of humanity on this planet, two hundred thousand people per square mile. It was a place where there was not even one tree for three thousand inhabitants, without a single flower, a butterfly, or a bird, apart from vultures and crows—it was a place where children did not even know what a bush, a forest, or a pond was, where the air was so ladened with carbon dioxide and sulphur that pollution killed at least one member in every family; a place where men and beasts baked in a furnace for the eight months of summer until the monsoon transformed their alleyways and shacks into lakes of mud and excrement; a place where leprosy, tuberculosis, dysentery and all the malnutrition diseases, until recently, reduced the average life expectancy to one of the lowest in the world; a place where eighty-five hundred cows and buffalo tied up to dung heaps provided milk infected with germs. Above all, however, the City of Joy was a place where the most extreme economic poverty ran rife. Nine out of ten of its inhabitants did not have a single rupee per day with which to buy half a pound of rice. Furthermore, like all other slums, the City of Joy was generally ignored by other citizens of Calcutta, except in case of crime or strike. Considered a dangerous neighborhood with a terrible reputation, the haunt of Untouchables, pariahs, social rejects, it was a world apart, living apart from the world.

* #8 - p. 41, 42

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The sharp stink, excreta, slums, pavement colonies, knotted traffic, the daily electricity blackouts, flooding, disease and hopelessness make it seem a version of hell. It is not long before the newcomer's sensibilities are affronted and tested by a gruesome thrusting stump, a nightmarishly eroded face, pleading streaming eyes, beggar children clinging like burrs, and streets of human piggeries. It all inspires anger, hatred, revulsion and pity.

..... The society is based on Gandhian ideas of liberating a group of untouchables, the scavengers and sweepers, who traditionally have cleaned primitive lavatories and carted away night soil; it also seeks to improve public health, a difficult task in a country where defecating is largely an open air activity and there is a belief that ordure is best dried by the sun and rendered into dust. Nevertheless the society has designed and made tens of thousands of cheap flush latrines and has been called in to help make Calcutta cleaner.

Calcutta's development has been in keeping with an important change in India in recent years, the growth of the cities. Since 1971 the major centres have swollen by 40 per cent, and there are now twelve cities with a population of a million or more. The urbanization of India increases as more people look to the towns for opportunities unavailable in the countryside. Twenty-three per cent of Indians now live in towns and the way they have to mix helps to break down the barriers of caste and class. You cannot ask a man his caste in a jammed commuter bus. Many people make their move to the cities by following in the footsteps of a relative or fellow villager who can provide a helping hand. A large number of the labourers in Delhi come from Rajasthan, for example. The newspaper sellers have migrated from a small part of Tamil Nadu, while people from a part of Andhra Pradesh monopolize the bicycle rickshaw business. The large-scale migration to the cities creates its own appalling problems, of overcrowding, squalor and unemployment. At the same time, the cities are breakers of moulds and broadeners of attitudes.

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* #2 - p. 156, 159

It is said that every day 1500 more people, about 350 families, arrive in Bombay to live. They come mainly from the countryside and they have very little; and in Bombay there isn't room for them. There is hardly room for the people already there. The older apartment blocks are full; the new skyscrapers are full; the small, low huts of the squatters' settlements on the airport road are packed tightly together. Bombay shows its overcrowding. It is built on an island, and its development has been haphazard. Outside the defence area at the southern tip of the island, open spaces are few; cramped living quarters and the heat drive people out into such public areas as exist, usually the streets; so that to be in Bombay is always to be in a crowd. By day the streets are clogged; at night the pavements are full of sleepers.

Whatever the number, it is now felt that there are too many. The very idea of beggary, precious to Hindus as religious theatre, a demonstration of the workings of *karma*, a reminder of one's duty to oneself and one's future lives, has been devalued. And the Bombay beggar, displaying his unusual mutilations (inflicted in childhood by the beggar-master who had acquired him, as proof of the young beggar's sins in a previous life), now finds, unfairly, that he provokes annoyance rather than awe. The beggars themselves, forgetting their Hindu function, also pester tourists; and the tourists misinterpret the whole business, seeing in the beggary of the few the beggary of all. The beggars have become a nuisance and a disgrace. By becoming too numerous they have lost their place in the Hindu system and have no claim on anyone.

Bombay - India's New York/Paris - 3 pages.

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* #10 - p. 57, 58

Of course, there are economic as well as political reasons for the slums. The problem can't be solved simply by implementing the planning laws. Bombay, India's commercial capital, is bursting at the seams. The heart of the city still retains its Victorian–Saracenic–Gothic splendour. The elaborately ornate Victoria Terminus makes even St Pancras look plain. But for the most part, Bombay is now a city of skyscrapers and slums. Many of the slum-dwellers are single men who have come to the city in search of work and left their wives and children in their villages. They are often supporting parents, brothers and sisters too.

In the Bombay slum of Jawaharnagar, named after Nehru to please the Congress Party, the rows of shacks with their tin roofs are divided by narrow alleys just four feet wide, with open drains down the middle of them. The living conditions seem grim enough to defeat the most resilient spirits, but they do not defeat the Bombay slum-dweller. The shacks are clean and decorated inside. Many of the children are smartly dressed and sent to school regularly. There is a temple on the corner of one of the alleys, and a flourishing bazaar on the edge of the slum.

* #15 - p. 67, 68

Delivery lorries piled high with fish from the Bombay ice-trains are unloaded by porters bent under the weight of baskets filled by the fish shovellers. Stink of fish and pong of dung wafts with the smell of tea and spices. A charity food stall dishes out rice and lentils to the poor on fresh leaves. Sugar cane is crushed on a barrow and juice sold by the glass for a few paise. Outside the police post a ragged man writhes on the ground while a constable beats him with a stick, kicks his shoulders, rolls him over and hits his legs. The crowd around this spectacle seems to approve: the man is a thief. After a while someone calls a rickshaw and he is dumped into it. In the mosque, where the quadrangle is half the size of a football pitch, there is a torpid air. The side galleries are filled with sleepers, women suckling and girls plaiting each other's hair. In the alleys nearby tailors squat with their sewing machines in alcoves just big enough for one crosslegged man and his work. Metalworkers carry on their old crafts. Apprentice boys chisel wood and stone in shadowy workshops. In a glittering alley tinsel, wire, paint and paper are made into gaudy decorations. Doctors in their cubby holes listen to the chests of wide-eyed little boys. In the paper bazaar merchants sit in alcoves with telephones, and tea boys slop and spill and skitter through the minefield of cow dung and pan spit. Ear cleaners ply their trade, wiggling their probes into their customers' waxy recesses, and pavement barbers lather and scrape.

* #2 - p. 131

The street-sweeper in Jaipur City uses his fingers alone to lift dust from the street into his cart (the dust blowing away in the process, returning to the street). The woman brushing the causeway of the great dam in Rajasthan before the top layer of concrete is put on uses a tiny strip of rag held between her thumb and middle finger. Veiled, squatting, almost motionless, but present, earning her half-rupee, her five cents, she does with her finger dabs in a day what a child can do with a single push of a long-handled broom. She is not expected to do more; she is hardly a person. Old India requires few tools, few skills, and many hands.

Their confidence, in the general doubt, is staggering. But it is so in India: the doers are always enthusiastic. And industrial India is a world away from the India of bureaucrats and journalists and theoreticians. The men who make and use machines – and the Indian industrial revolution is increasingly Indian: more and more of the machines are made in India – glory in their new skills. Industry in India is not what industry is said to be in other parts of the world. It has its horrors; but, in spite of Gandhi, it does not – in the context of India – dehumanize. An industrial job in India is more than just a job. Men handling new machines, exercising technical skills that to them are new, can also discover themselves as men, as individuals.

They are the lucky few.

Street sweeper in Jaipur.

* #10 - p. 74, 75

THE MONSOON

"THO' APRIL SHOWERS MAY COME YOUR WAY; THEY BRING THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN MAY"- OR SO THE OLD MELODY STATES. MY SUMMER SOJOURN TO INDIA ADDS MEANING TO THAT SONG. THE MONSOON SHOWERS BRING LIFE ITSELF, AND SOME DEATH. IT NOURISHES THE SOIL, BRINGS LIFE TO THE CROPS, AND JOY TO THE PEASANT FARMERS.

Usually a violent wind gets up a few days before the monsoon breaks. The sky darkens suddenly as clouds invade the earth, rolling one on top of the other like rolls of cotton and skimming across the surface of the fields at extraordinary speed. Then other enormous and seemingly golden-edged clouds succeed them and a few moments later a tremendous blast of wind explodes into a hurricane of sand. Finally, a further bank of black clouds, this time without their golden edges, plunges the sky and the land into darkness. An interminable roll of thunder shakes the air and the stage is set. Agni, the Fire god of the Vedas, protector of men and their hearths, hurls his thunderbolts. The large, warm raindrops turn into cataracts. Children fling themselves stark naked into the downpour, shrieking for joy, men dance and women chant their thanksgiving prayers in the shelter of the verandas.

Agni the God of Thunderbolts.

* #8 - p. 14

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Monsoon is not another word for rain. As its original Arabic name indicates, it is a season. There is a summer monsoon as well as a winter monsoon, but it is only the nimbus south-west winds of summer that make a *mausem* —the season of the rains. The winter monsoon is simply rain in winter. It is like a cold shower on a frosty morning. It leaves one chilled and shivering. Although it is good for the crops, people pray for it to end. Fortunately, it does not last very long.

The summer monsoon is quite another affair. It is preceded by several months of working up a thirst so that when the waters come they are drunk deep and with relish. From the end of February, the sun starts getting hotter and spring gives way to summer. Flowers wither. Flowering trees take their place. First come the orange showers of the flame of the forest, the vermilion of the coral tree, and the virginal white of the champak. They are followed by the mauve Jacaranda, the flamboyant gol mohur, and the soft gold cascades of the laburnum. Then the trees also lose their flowers. Their leaves fall. Their bare branches stretch up to the sky begging for water, but there is no water. The sun comes up earlier than before and licks up the drops of dew before the fevered earth can moisten its lips. It blazes away all day long in a cloudless grey sky, drying up wells, streams and lakes. It sears the grass and thorny scrub till they catch fire. The fires spread and dry jungles burn like matchwood.

The sun goes on, day after day, from east to west, scorching relentlessly. The earth cracks up and deep fissures open their gaping mouths asking for water; but there

is no water—only the shimmering haze at noon making mirage lakes of quicksilver. Poor villagers take their thirsty cattle out to drink and are struck dead. The rich wear sunglasses and hide behind chicks of khus fibre on which their servants pour water.

The sun makes an ally of the breeze. It heats the air till it becomes the loo and then sends it on its errand. Even in the intense heat, the loo's warm caresses are sensuous and pleasant. It brings up the prickly heat. It produces a numbness which makes the head nod and the eyes heavy with sleep. It brings on a stroke which takes its victim as gently as breeze bears a fluff of thistledown.

Then comes a period of false hopes. The loo drops. The air becomes still. From the southern horizon a black wall begins to advance. Hundreds of kites and crows fly ahead. Can it be . . . ? No, it is a dust storm. A fine powder begins to fall. A solid mass of locusts covers the sun. They devour whatever is left on the trees and in the fields. Then comes the storm itself. In furious sweeps it smacks open doors and windows, banging them forward and backward, smashing their glass panes. Thatched roofs and corrugated iron sheets are borne aloft into the sky like bits of paper. Trees are torn up by the roots and fall across power lines. The tangled wires electrocute people and start fires in houses. The storm carries the flames to other houses till there is a conflagration. All this happens in a few seconds. Before you can say *Chakravartyrajagopalachari*, the gale is gone. The dust hanging in the air settles on your books, furniture and food; it gets in your eyes and ears and throat and nose.

This happens over and over again until the people have lost all hope. They are disillusioned, dejected, thirsty and sweating. The prickly heat on the back of their necks is like emery paper. There is another lull. A hot petrified

A two-page description of the monsoon.

silence prevails. Then comes the shrill, strange call of a bird. Why has it left its cool bosky shade and come out in the sun? People look up wearily at the lifeless sky. Yes, there it is with its mate! They are like large black-and-white bulbuls with perky crests and long tails. They are pied-crested cuckoos who have flown all the way from Africa ahead of the monsoon. Isn't there a gentle breeze blowing? And hasn't it a damp smell? And wasn't the rumble which drowned the birds' anguished cry the sound of thunder? The people hurry to the roofs to see. The same ebony wall is coming up from the east. A flock of herons fly across. There is a flash of lightning which outshines the daylight. The wind fills the black sails of the clouds and they billow out across the sun. A profound shadow falls on the earth. There is another clap of thunder. Big drops of rain fall and dry up in the dust. A fragrant smell rises from the earth. Another flash of lightning and another crack of thunder like the roar of a hungry tiger. It has come! Sheets of water, wave after wave. The people lift their faces to the clouds and let the abundance of water cover them. Schools and offices close. All work stops. Men, women and children run madly about the streets, waving their arms and shouting "Ho, Ho,"—hosannas to the miracle of the monsoon.

The monsoon is not like ordinary rain which comes and goes. Once it is on, it stays for two months or more. Its advent is greeted with joy. Parties set out for picnics and litter the countryside with the skins and stones of mangoes. Women and children make swings on branches of trees and spend the day in sport and song. Peacocks spread their tails and strut about with their mates; the woods echo with their shrill cries.

But after a few days the flush of enthusiasm is gone. The earth becomes a big stretch of swamp and mud. Wells and

lakes fill up and burst their bounds. In towns, gutters get clogged and streets become turbid streams. In villages, mud walls of huts melt in the water and thatched roofs sag and descend on the inmates. Rivers which keep rising steadily from the time the summer's heat starts melting the snows, suddenly turn to floods as the monsoon spends itself on the mountains. Roads, railway tracks and bridges go under water. Houses near the riverbanks are swept down to the sea.

With the monsoon, the tempo of life and death increases. Almost overnight grass begins to grow and leafless trees turn green. Snakes, centipedes and scorpions are born out of nothing. The ground is strewn with earthworms, ladybirds and tiny frogs. At night, myriads of moths flutter around the lamps. They fall in everybody's food and water. Geckos dart about filling themselves with insects till they get heavy and fall off ceilings. Inside rooms the hum of mosquitoes is maddening. People spray clouds of insecticide, and the floor becomes a layer of wriggling bodies and wings. Next evening, there are many more fluttering around the lamp shades and burning themselves in the flames.

While the monsoon lasts, the showers start and stop without warning. The clouds fly across, dropping their rain on the plains as it pleases them, till they reach the Himalayas. They climb up the mountainsides. Then the cold squeezes the last drops of water out of them. Lightning and thunder never cease. All this happens in late August or early September. Then the season of the rains gives way to autumn.

* #12 - p. 108 -111

CULTURAL INTERPLAY

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WHERE'S THE TOILET PAPER? IMAGINE YOUR SHOCK, YOUR PERPLEXITY, YOUR GROWING SENSE OF "OH MY GOODNESS, WHAT NOW?" - AS YOU SIT (OR SQUAT) ON THE TOILET (IF THERE IS ONE AND NOT CONCRETE FOOTPADS RAISED SLIGHTLY FROM THE FLOOR). CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ABOUND, AND ONE MUST BE ALERT TO THEM TO AVOID THE SHOCK, THE EMBARRASSMENT THAT THEY CAN CAUSE YOU AND YOUR HOSTS. TO KNOW THESE PRACTICES IS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PEOPLE YOU ARE VISITING; TO KNOW THEM ALLOWS YOU TO ATTEMPT TO BE A CONSIDERATE VISITOR BY FOLLOWING AS MANY OF THEIR PRACTICES AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE.

'You turned away when we were taking your pictures.'

'Yes, madam.'

'How much do you want for letting us take your pictures?'

'How much what, sir?'

'Listen to that. Simple eh?'

'Money, you know, like good dollars.'

'What is dollars, please?'

'Hear that?'

'Dollars, the best money, you know, coins, gold.'

'Excuse me, I do not understand.'

'No, I'll say you don't. You're the funniest beggars I've seen this whole trip. You don't hold out your hands. You don't yell at me. You don't even know what dollars are. What kind of beggars are you, anyway?'

'We are not beggars.'

'Why sure you are. Look at your clothes, and look at that little bit of food you just shared among the whole lot of you. I can tell beggars now.'

'No, we are tourists, like yourself.'

'Tourists. Did you hear that? He says they are tourists just like us.'

'What do you mean you are tourists?'

'We come from Bengal. We travel around India to see the great cities and the places of the gods.'

'Oh, you are pilgrims. Oh, yeah, well that makes it a bit different.'

'No, we are not pilgrims if you think we go only to worship. We have been seeing many things, great farms, industries and many schools. We are tourists.'

'Well how does a bunch of beggars like you get to be tourists? Find a pot of gold or something?'

'No, it is a gift.' Slowly, with great care, Harischandra told their story. While he did so the villagers had a chance to examine the three in detail. Some even dared to touch the bright cloth of the lady's dress, wondering that she pulled away from them in fear. When Harischandra finished, one of the men spoke:

'Well that beats anything I've heard about in this weird country. A rich lady giving all her money so that some simple farmers can go around and look at factories and schools and temples. How many rich folks back home would do that? None, eh? Well, sir, you and your friends here should forgive us for calling you beggars. We are getting kind of used to being asked for money by beggars when we take their pictures.'

'They bother us, too, even though we have no cameras.'

'Beggars ask you for money?'

'They think we must be rich if we can travel. And it is true we are richer than many.'

'You mean beggars bother Indians, too, not just foreign tourists?'

'Of course. There are beggars everywhere and there are Indians everywhere, but there are few foreign tourists. They would not live if they only begged from you.'

'Well I never.'

"Taking pictures, stealing a soul" - a wonderful reading for cultural understanding.

* #7 - p. 216, 217

'Yes. You see we do not understand why you take our pictures when we are worshipping in temples, or eating, which to us are very private things to do. We do not know if you take pictures of your own people when they are at prayer. To us many things are strange.'

'We take pictures in order to show the folks back home what we see over here, we don't mean to offend you. Is that why you turned your backs?'

'Yes.'

Temple photos.

* #7 - p. 218

'This is a third-class ticket.'

'Yes, tourist's circular ticket, issued at Baroda House.'

'It is not fit for foreigners to buy third-class tickets.'

'How else would we meet the others who travel?'

'Only beggars or poor farmers can use third-class tickets. Foreigners must pay more. It is not in order.'

'It is paid for and issued at Baroda House.'

'So was this carriage, we also travel from Baroda House.'

'I tell you it is not in order. No foreigner should travel third-class. That is why they will only tell others that India is a dirty and backward country. We want them to travel first-class, there are good soft chairs in first-class. Then you can have good servants and drinks, and see that the country is beautiful and has many industries. I tell you it is very bad of Baroda House to give you a third-class ticket.'

'Most people travel third-class.'

'It is not my affair that most people are fools and good-for-nothings who can only pay for a third-class ticket. Those who work go second-class and foreigners always go first-class.'

'The ticket is good. May I have it back, please?'

'The ticket is badly written. You must come to my office while I examine it. You cannot travel with these people. They have a special pass. You have no special pass. You have only one badly written third-class ticket. Come to my office.'

'You cannot take her away.'

Third class ticket.

* #7 - p. 268

People who had spent the night, ten or twelve to a single rat-and-vermin-infested hovel, were born again with the daylight as if at the world's first dawning. Their daily resurrection began with a general process of purification. There, in alleyways awash with slime, beside the disease-ridden stream of a sewer, the occupants of the City of Joy banished the miasma of the night with all the ritual of a meticulous toilet. Without revealing so much as a patch of their nudity, the women managed to wash themselves all over, from their long hair to the soles of their feet, not forgetting their saris. After that, they would take the greatest care to oil, comb, and braid their hair, before decorating it with a fresh flower picked from God only knew where. At every water point, men were showering themselves with tins. Young boys cleaned their teeth with acacia twigs coated with ashes, old men polished their tongues with strands of jute, mothers deloused their children before soaping their little naked bodies with a vigor undiminished even by the biting cold of winter mornings.

Ritual cleansing

A.M. Purification Ritual.

* #8 - p.. 81

The Pole had already committed an unforgivable blunder: he had brought with him a few sheets of toilet paper. Was it conceivable that anyone should want to preserve in paper a defilement expelled from the body and then leave it for other people? Showing him a tinful of water he was holding in his hand, a young lad tried to make Stephan understand that he should wash himself, then clean the bowl. Looking around him, Kovalski established that indeed everyone had brought a similar receptacle full of water. Some people even had several that they shuttled forward with their feet as the line gradually advanced.

Toilet paper supply.

The attitude to time in India was that time and space, although two co-ordinates in which human life is placed, do not exhaust human possibilities. Time is not a pragmatic, realistic, physical thing, which can be measured, which governs our lives; it wasn't that at all. Hindus had a concept of time which was immense. If you see the Indian myths, the time is often in terms of millions of years. So if you are five minutes late, it simply does not matter.

Indian time.

* #15 - p. 57

Caste and clan are more than brotherhoods; they define the individual completely. The individual is never on his own; he is always fundamentally a member of his group, with a complex apparatus of rules, rituals, taboos. Every detail of behaviour is regulated – the bowels to be cleared before breakfast and never after, for instance, the left hand and not the right to be used for intimate sexual contact, and so on. Relationships are codified. And religion and religious practices – 'magic and animistic ways of thinking' – lock everything into place. The need, then, for individual observation and judgement is reduced; something close to a purely instinctive life becomes possible.

The difference between the Indian and the Western ways of perceiving comes out most clearly in the sex act. Western man can describe the sex act; even at the moment of orgasm he can observe himself. Kakar says that his Indian patients, men and women, do not have this gift, cannot describe the sex act, are capable only of saying, 'It happened.'

the Indian ego is 'underdeveloped', 'the world of magic and animistic ways of thinking lie close to the surface', and the Indian grasp of reality is 'relatively tenuous'

A comparison of an Indian with an American.

* #10 - p. 101, 102

Don't be surprised if your guests arrive late. Time is generally observed less strictly in India than in the United States. In

arranging for food, one needs to remember the great variety of dietary customs, many of them with a religious basis. Since Hindus value all animal life, especially that of the cow, they will usually not eat beef, and may be complete vegetarians, which means that fish or egg dishes (including baked foods containing eggs) are precluded. Muslims will not eat ham, pork or bacon, as they consider the pig unclean. Parsis do not eat onions or garlic. One needs to know not only what guests will eat, but also what the cook is willing to prepare—he may also have some religious restrictions, which one should ascertain when hiring him.

A first refusal of refreshments need not be taken as final.

Many Indians feel that eating hot and cold foods together injures the health. So coffee or tea will almost never be served along with ice cream. And ice water would not be served with a hot meal. Coffee and tea are not usually served with lunch or dinner except by urbanized Indians. But there would be no objection to your doing so.

Afternoon tea, where both salty and sweet refreshments are served, is a general custom in India. As a result, evening meals here are often much later than in the United States. In timing your meals, remember that in India conversation usually precedes dining, and guests generally leave soon after they have eaten.

Dinner customs - 2 pages.

* #1 - p. 30, 31

When visiting an Indian home for a meal, you are not expected to take a gift to the hostess. Nor are you usually expected to write a note of thanks afterwards. Appreciation is expressed at the time. But in showing that appreciation, don't gush over every dish or every act of courtesy. People expect you to have anticipated cordial hospitality and good food. Excessive praise or wonder may sound insincere, or it may make your hosts feel that you hadn't expected to be served properly. Indians usually express thanks less frequently than Americans, saving it for real gratitude rather than for routine purposes.

As a guest, one should not expect to tour the house or ask to do so. Wait for the host or hostess to make any such offer. Be particularly careful not to enter the kitchen unless you are specifically invited to do so. One should not expect to ask to meet the women of the house either. They will appear when it is proper for them to do so.

If someone belches during, a meal, don't be taken aback—this is generally taken as a tribute to the meal. After eating with your fingers, you will probably be offered a place to wash your hands. Feel free to inquire if nothing seems forthcoming.

Don't be surprised if your hosts do not eat with you. In many families the wife eats only after all the guests have finished. This is one reason why guests usually leave soon after eating. During the meal, don't feel that you have to keep up a conversation. Indians often do their visiting before a meal, rather than during it. And don't worry if some women in the group are not speaking or seem to be left out of conversations.

A guest should, of course, ask permission to smoke unless others are doing so. Many Indians consider it a sign of respect not to smoke in front of their elders or superiors. If the host offers cigarettes, smoke those rather than your own. To say that you would rather stick to your own brand may suggest that the host has been negligent in his duties.

Except among very urbanized Indians, do not comment on or praise a wife's beauty. Otherwise you may sound improperly interested in her. Be careful also about praising the looks or health of children. Many people believe that such compliments invite calamity. Fear of the "evil eye" is fairly common in Indian society. A black spot on a child's forehead or a string around his wrist helps to avert this evil eye. But the black eyeshadow used on children is only an ointment and a decoration. A red spot on a woman's forehead is purely decorative, and indicates nothing about her religion.

Indians often expect your permission, and may ask for it to leave your presence. If someone asks "May I have your permission?" he is inquiring whether he may go. An American who says "Well, I guess I'll be going" is likely to sound boorish.

Westerners are frequently taken aback at being stared at openly. Try to understand that staring is not considered rude—that it just expresses interest and curiosity.

Whistling of any kind is generally considered impolite, and one should never, of course, whistle at a girl. A wink may also be taken as an insult, and would not be understood as a sign that one is joking.

American men should be careful to avoid touching members of the opposite sex—unless, of course, in a situation that obviously calls for it! Especially with ladies, one usually uses the Indian form of greeting—folding the hands together rather than shaking hands. At most social gatherings, except in the largest cities, one can expect formal and informal segregation of the sexes. Indians seldom show affection between the sexes in public, and Westerners would do well to show some discretion in that regard. Indian men, however, frequently hold hands with each other. In swimming-pool dressing rooms, etc., men do not undress fully in front of each other.

Single girls should be aware that their openness and freedom as compared with most Indian girls may be interpreted as inviting advances. Inviting a man to enter your room, or smoking or drinking in public, may be interpreted as a sign of moral laxity.

At public performances or ceremonies, including ones at which you may be speaking, don't be offended by the casual attitude shown by the audience. Strict silence is seldom demanded at such functions, and hand-clapping has been adopted only rather recently as a sign of appreciation. If garlanded at a public function, the guest usually removes the garland from his neck at once, as a sign of humility

Whistling, looking, touching.

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* #1 - p. 34, 35

One further word about a public and private problem. You will soon learn the local ways of dealing with sanitation problems. Some Indians consider our use of handkerchiefs, toilet paper and bathtubs as less hygienic than their methods. One should either carry toilet paper with him or adjust ot the use of the left hand and water. An empty tin or a small jug (lota) of water next to the toilet in your own house would be a convenience to some visitors. *

Criticism, even when asked for, is generally not appreciated. Don't make fun of astrology, palmistry, unusual health remedies or charms. Many Indians, both educated and non-educated, take them quite seriously.

Do be generous in praising the things you like about the country.

Although you may be asked all kinds of personal questions, it is best not to ask such questions yourself until you know a person well.

the shake of the head with which many Indians indicate "Yes" is close to the American head-shake which indicates "no". Beckoning here is done with the hand turned down rather than up. Pointing is done with the chin. And snapping the fingers is likely to produce a servant!

Bargaining is a common practice, both for goods and services. This skill can only be learned by experience. One usually bargains for a ride in a vehicle without a meter before engaging the vehicle. And in almost all curio shops except government ones, it is wise not to accept the initial price.

Count your change, and don't accept even slightly torn bills. In preparing for travel, collect loose change and small bills. Taxi and rickshaw drivers and coolies should not be expected to provide change though they will occasionally do so.

A few other cultural tidbits.

* #1 - p. 35, 36

ANOTHER CRADLE OF RELIGION

WE ALWAYS VIEWED THE MIDDLE EAST AS THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION, A CRADLE IN PART FOR OUR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE, THE BIRTHPLACE OF JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM. WE SHOULD CONSIDER THE SUBCONTINENT AS ANOTHER CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION; HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, JAINISM, AND SIKHISM WERE ALL FOUNDED IN THIS SPIRITUAL HEARTLAND.

WHEN WE THINK OF SPIRITUAL INDIA, WE CONJURE UP HOLY MEN IN THEIR SAFFRON-COLORED ROBES CHANTING MANTRAS, CREMATIONS ON THE GHATS IN VARANASI, THE UBIQUITOUS COW WONDERING THE STREETS OF ANY VILLAGE, AND THE BROKEN AND MAIMED BEGGAR ASKING FOR ALMS.

A twelve-lettered *mantra* will be chanted and written fifty million times; and that is what – in this time of Emergency, with the constitution suspended, the press censored – five thousand volunteers are doing. When the job is completed, an inscribed gold plate will be placed below the new idol to attest to the creation of its divinity and the devotion of the volunteers. A thousand-year-old temple will live again: India, Hindu India, is eternal: conquests and defilements are but instants in time.

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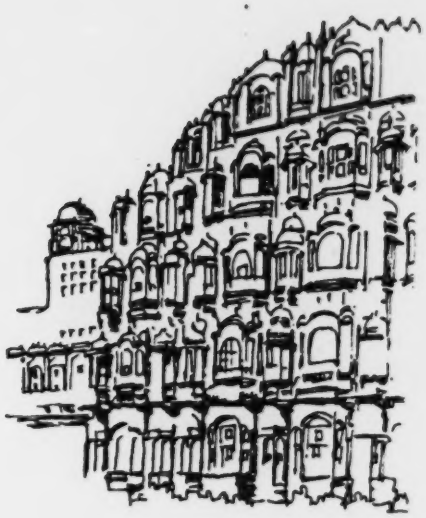
Chaitya Cave, Ajanta



Hawa Mahal, Jaipur

Hinduism hasn't been good enough for the millions. It has exposed us to a thousand years of defeat and stagnation. It has given men no idea of a contract with other men, no idea of the state. It has enslaved one quarter of the population and always left the whole fragmented and vulnerable. Its philosophy of withdrawal has diminished men intellectually and not equipped them to respond to challenge; it has stifled growth. So that again and again in India history has repeated itself: vulnerability, defeat, withdrawal. And there are not four hundred millions now, but something nearer seven hundred.*

* #10 - p. 53

India swallows me up and now it seems to me that I am no longer in my room but in the white-hot city streets under a white-hot sky; people cannot live in such heat, so everything is deserted—no, not quite, for here comes a smiling leper in a cart being pushed by another leper; there is also the carcass of a dog and vultures have swooped down on it. The river has dried up and stretches in miles of flat cracked earth; it is not possible to make out where the river ceases and the land begins, for this too is as flat, as cracked, as dry as the riverbed and stretches on forever. Until we come to a jungle in which wild beasts live, and then there are ravines and here live outlaws with the hearts of wild beasts. Sometimes they make raids into the villages and they rob and burn and mutilate and kill for sport. More mountains and these are very, very high, and now it is no longer hot but terribly cold, we are in snow and ice and here is Mount Kailash on which sits Siva the Destroyer wearing a necklace of human skulls. Down in the plains they are worshiping him. I can see them from here—they are doing something strange—what is it? I draw nearer. Now I can see. They are killing a boy. They hack him to pieces and now they bury the pieces into the foundations dug for a new bridge. There is a priest with them who is quite naked except for ash smeared all over him; he is reciting some holy verses over the foundations, to bless and propitiate.

I am using these exaggerated images in order to give some idea of how intolerable India—the idea, the sensation of it—can become.

. . . . . .

. . . . and it really is true that God seems more present in India than in other places. Every morning I wake up at 3 A.M. to the sound of someone pouring out his spirit in devotional song; and then at dawn the temple bells ring, and again at dusk, and conch shells are blown, and there is the smell of incense and of the slightly overblown flowers that are placed at the feet of smiling, pink-cheeked idols. I read in the papers that the Lord Krishna has been reborn as the son of a weaver woman in a village somewhere in Madhya Pradesh. On the banks of the river there are figures in meditation and one of them may turn out to be the teller in your bank who cashed your check just a few days ago; now he is in the lotus pose and his eyes are turned up and he is in ecstasy. There are ashrams full of little old half-starved widows who skip and dance about, they giggle and play hide-and-seek because they are Krishna's milkmaids. And over all this there is a sky of enormous proportions—so much larger than the earth on which you live, and often so incredibly beautiful, an unflawed unearthly blue by day, all shining with stars at night, that it is difficult to believe that something grand and wonderful beyond the bounds of human comprehension does not emanate from there.

God is present in India - more so than other places.

* #4 - p. 19, 20

acceptance of reincarnation is manifest in the bearing of different caste groups. Members of serving castes and scheduled castes are deferential, *kachhis* independent. Most of the Brahmans have an air which ranges from self-assurance to arrogance. They know that they are on top, and they feel that they have earned this in an earlier incarnation.

Dharma is accepted in the village. Just as everyone in the family has a definite role, so every person in the village has a role in relation to others. Carpenters' sons are trained by fathers to be carpenters, *darzi* (tailors') boys are trained to be *darzis*. The same is true of others. Indian village society can be likened to chess, where each piece has a prescribed move or role. American society is more like checkers with every piece more or less the same.

The idea of *ahimsa*, non-injury to living things, permeates the lives of the village men and women. They are reluctant to take the life of any creature. Yet, they do not feed their dogs. They allow them to starve and become ferocious but will not kill them or drown puppies even though some are doomed to die early. The mother of my courtyard goes through the form of swatting at a fly, but I do not think that she has ever actually killed one. The children swat effectively and with zest. No adult in the family would willingly kill a rat. However, when my servant brought us a cat, they approved of the cat's prowess in obliterating the rats and thereby sparing a good deal of stored grain.

Reincarnation, dharma, ahimsa.

* #16 - p. 259

'My friend, I do not understand this phrase 'get released'. Here we view enlightenment as an achievement of study, discipline and devotion. One earns release, or revelation, one cannot be made aware by any other agent than one's mind, or the tools of one's spirit. First you must master the languages of revelation, either in our tradition or in your own, and then you must practise hard until you are able to reach that one moment of joy. Nothing can obtain it for you except work and constant awareness.' The small man was revelling in the phrases of the foreign language. Harischandra struggled to translate.

'But does not a guru do that? He releases you and you get enlightened. It is not hard, they said so in Rishikesh. We have been looking for a guru who will take us together.' The boy put his arm around the girl. Amiya looked away. The old teacher smiled and then his face grew sad. Slowly he withdrew into himself and the Indians knew that the interview was over. The couple looked confused as people started to walk on and as the old man began to murmur, oblivious of them all.

'Why did he stop talking like that? Why did he look so sad?'

The couple turned to the remaining watchers. A studious-looking man looked at the holy man and at the boy's honest bewilderment. Finally he spoke:

'I think he fears that you have only disappointments ahead, and he does not wish you to go from our country with this disappointment. There is no easy way to truth.'

Getting released.

* #7 - p. 62

Written, so tradition has it, by a sage at the dictation of the gods two and a half thousand years ago, the Ramayana opens with a marvelous love story. The handsome young Rama, the only one of all the princes to be able to bend the bow of the god Shiva, receives as his reward the princess Sita. Her father wishes to give his throne to the young couple but, succumbing in his weakness to one of his favorite ladies, he exiles them instead to the wild forests of central India. There they are attacked by demon brigands whose leader, the terrible Ravana, harbors a lustful passion for Sita. Tricking her husband into leaving her alone, the demon succeeds in seizing the princess and lifting her onto his winged chariot drawn by flying, carnivorous donkeys. He transports her to his fabulous island of Lanka—none other than Ceylon—where he shuts her up in his quarters, seeking in vain to seduce her.

In order to win back his wife, Rama forms an alliance with the king of the monkeys who places at the prince's disposal his principal general, Hanuman, and the whole army of monkeys aided by bands of squirrels. With one single prodigious leap across the sea, the monkey general reaches Ceylon, finds the captive princess, reassures her, and after a thousand heroic and comic reversals reports back to Rama. With the help of the monkey army, the latter manages to sling a bridge across the sea and invade the island. A furious battle is then waged against the demons. Eventually Rama personally defeats the odious Ravana and good thus triumphs over evil. The freed Sita appears, overwhelmed with joy.

Complications, however, set in, for Rama sadly pushes her away. "What man could take back and cherish a woman who has lived in another's house?" he exclaims. The faultless Sita, wounded to the quick, then has a funeral pyre erected and casts herself into the flames. Virtue, however, cannot perish in the fire: the flames spare her, testifying to her innocence, and all ends with a grand finale. The bewildered Rama takes back his wife and returns with her in triumph to his capital, where he is at last crowned amid unforgettable rejoicing.

The ragamuffins of the City of Joy knew every tableau, every scene, every twist and turn of this flowing epic. They followed each move made by the actors, the mimes, the clowns, and the acrobats.

They laughed, cried, suffered, and rejoiced with them. Over their rags they felt the weight of the performers' costumes, on their cheeks they felt the thickness of their makeup. Many of them even knew whole passages from the text word for word. In India it is quite possible for a person to be "illiterate" and still know thousands of verses of epic poetry by heart. Old Surya from the tea shop, the children of Mehboub and Selima, Kovalski's former neighbors, the coal man from Nizamudhin Lane, Margareta and her offspring, the lovely Kalima and the other eunuchs, the former sailor from Kerala and his aborigine neighbors, Bandona and her Assamese brothers and sisters, the godfather and his thugs, hundreds of Hindus, Christians, and even Muslims packed themselves in side by side, night after night, before the magic stage. Among the most assiduous spectators was Hasari Pal. "That broken man went every night," Kovalski was to say, "to draw new strength from his encounter with the exemplary obstinacy of Rama, the courage of the monkey general, and the virtue of Sita."

To the rickshaw puller "those heroes were like tree trunks in the middle of raging floodwaters, life buoys that you could cling to!" He could remember how when he was a small child, carried on his mother's hip as she walked the narrow dikes across the rice fields, she used to sing softly to him the verses of the mythical adventures of the monkey general. Later, whenever bards and storytellers passed through the village, his family would gather along with all the others in the square, to listen for nights on end to the extravagant recitations always so rich in resilience, which had nourished the beliefs of India since time immemorial and given a religious dimension to its everyday life. There was not one infant on that vast peninsula who did not fall asleep to the sound of his elder sister intoning a few episodes from that great poem, not one children's game that did not derive its inspiration from the confrontations between good and evil, not a single schoolbook that did not extol the exploits of the heroes, not a marriage ceremony that did not cite Sita as an example of the virtues of fidelity. Each year, several grand festivals commemorated the victory of Rama and the benevolence of the monkey god. Each evening in Calcutta, thousands of dockers, coolies, rickshaw pullers, laborers, and starving people would assemble around the storytellers on the embankments of the Hooghly. Squatting for hours, their eyes half-closed, these people whom happiness seemed to have somehow overlooked, exchanged the harshness of their reality for a few grains of fantasy.

Ramayana and today.

* #8 - p. 398-400

Once a year, at the end of the monsoon, the eight million Hindus in Calcutta commemorate this victory by celebrating a four-day festival, the splendor and fervor of which are probably without equal in the rest of the world. For four festive days the city becomes a city of light, joy, and hope. Preparation for the festival begins several months beforehand, in the old quarter occupied by the potters' caste, where hundreds of artisans create a collection of the most magnificent statues ever consecrated to a deity or his saints. For one whole year the craftsmen compete between themselves to produce the most colossal and most sumptuous representation of the goddess Durga. Having constructed a framework out of braided straw, the potters coat their models with clay before sculpturing them to produce the desired shape and expression. Finally they complete their handiwork by painting and clothing them. Ordered in advance by families, communities, neighborhoods, factories, or workshops, these thousands of Durgas are all destined to take their places, on the first day of the festival, under one of the thousand canopies, known as *pandals*, erected in the streets, avenues, and crossroads of the city. The construction of these canopies, and especially their decoration, is the subject of great rivalry.

Celebration for the Goddess Durga.

* #8 - p. 195

Establishing a bond with Hindus was indeed easier. For them God was everywhere: in a door, a fly, a piece of bamboo, and in the millions of incarnations of a pantheon of deities, in which Surya considered Jesus Christ naturally had his place in the same way that Buddha, Mahavira, and even Muhammad. For them, these prophets were all avatars of the Great God who transcended everything.*

To a Hindu, He is everywhere.

* #8 - p. 243

Kovalski laid a hand on the American's shoulder. "Spiritually, you know, we Christians are Jews," he went on. "Abraham is the father of us all. Moses is our guide. The Red Sea is part of my culture—no, of my life. Like the tablets of the Law, the desert, the Arch of Alliance. The prophets are our consciences. David is our psalmist. Judaism brought us Yahweh, the God who is all-powerful, transcendent, universal. Judaism teaches us to love our neighbor as we love God! What a wonderful commandment that is. Eight centuries before Christ, you realize, Judaism introduced to the world the extraordinary notion of a one, universal God, a notion that could only be the fruit of revelation. Even Hinduism, despite all its intuitive, mystical power, has never been able to envisage a personal God. It was the exclusive privilege of Israel to have revealed that vision to the world and never to have strayed from it. That's really fantastic. Just think, Max, the same luminous moment of humanity that saw the birth of Buddha, Lao-tzu, Confucius, Mahavira, also witnessed a Jewish prophet called Isaiah proclaiming the primacy of Love over Law."

Love! It was in India that both the Jew and the Christian had discovered the real meaning of the word. Two of their brothers from the City of Joy were to remind them of it that very evening on their return. "A blind man of about thirty was squatting at the end of the main street in front of a small boy struck with polio," Max would recount. "He was speaking to the boy as he gently massaged first the youngster's needle-thin calves, then his deformed knees and thighs. The boy held on to the man's neck with a look submerged with gratitude. His blind companion was laughing. He was still so young, yet he exuded a serenity and goodness that was almost supernatural. After a few minutes he stood up and took the boy delicately by the shoulders to get him on his feet. The latter made an effort to support himself on his legs. The blind man spoke a few words and the lad put one foot in front of him into the murky water that swamped the street. Again the blind man pushed him gently forward and the child moved his other leg. He had taken a step. Reassured, he took a second. After a few minutes they both were making their way down the middle of the alley, the little boy acting as guide for his brother in darkness and the latter propelling the young polio victim forward. So remarkable was the sight of those two castaways that even the children playing marbles on the curbstones stood up to watch as they passed."

Love in India, in the religious sense.

* #8 - p. 339, 340

Although Nehru succeeded in preventing India's development into a theocratic state like Pakistan, he was unable to banish Hindu revivalism from politics altogether; and in later years, under his successors, it was to play an increasingly ominous role. Hindu revivalism fed, in particular, on the guilt by association which tarred the large minority of Muslims who stayed on in India after partition. A leading Muslim journalist, M. J. Akbar, explains the peculiar dilemma which the existence of Pakistan created for Indian Muslims.

> This sub-continent was partitioned by the Muslims. The guilt of that still remains; the price that has to be paid still remains. The real tragedy is that the price of partition is not being paid by the people who got Pakistan, but by the Muslims in India.... The memory of a nation divided is a powerful one. It seeps into decisions, sub-consciously or unconsciously sometimes. It creates an aura of suspicion around the Indian Muslim; it adds to the argument that the Muslim cannot really be trusted.

Theocracy/Democracy.

Hinduism has survived the sword of Islam and Christian persecution. According to Badrinath Chaturvedi, the author of a major work on Indian civilisation, its great strength is its ideological flexibility.

> One of the principles of Indian thought has been that all ideas are only an approximation to the truth. Therefore, no idea represents the whole truth. As a consequence, Indians developed an attitude towards other opinions and ideas which was very accepting. Everything was valid; so that the question was not between truth and untruth, or what was right and wrong, but between incomplete perceptions and, relatively speaking, more complete perceptions.

It is one of the many paradoxes of modern India that although discrimination by caste has been outlawed, most politicians admit that caste, not ideology, continues to dominate Indian politics.

Surviving other religious invasions.

I do find a pattern of discrimination against Muslim villages, Muslim localities in towns, Muslim pockets of population, and this is what I resent. The government ought to treat all people alike. Why is it that the Muslim localities in any town are the least cared for by the local municipality? Why is it that primary schools are not being established on the basis of the official ratio of schools to population in Muslim villages? This is the pattern of discrimination that we are against. Because of this discrimination I am conscious of a growing sense of restiveness among Muslim youth. They feel that they are victims of inequality – that they don't get jobs, they don't get education. All this builds up, and they say: 'We have got to start a struggle.' It would certainly be a very unfortunate day for our country if things came to such a pass that the Hindus and Muslims were at each other's throats throughout the length and breadth of India. It will not remain a localised problem.

Discrimination against Muslims.

* #15 - p. 82

Punjab has all the characteristics of West Germany—except cleanliness. It is important to know something about this State which has been so much in the minds of all Indians. Let it be remembered that soon after partition, the State was in a total mess. The towns and cities lay desolate, spattered with communal blood. Two of the five rivers, virtually the entire canal system and some of the best land went to Pakistan. Add to that what is common knowledge that Punjab has neither coal nor any heavy industry nor oil. Yet, in wheat yield per hectare, the Punjabi farmer has bested the United States, the Soviet Union, Canada and Pakistan. In rice yield he has bested China and plans to beat Japan as well. The motto is: Can do. Of every 100 kgs of wheat the Union Government buys, Punjab provides 63 kgs and, of every 100 kgs of rice, Punjab's contribution is 56 kgs. And this from a state that does not eat rice and treats it as something to be eaten when one is sick.

he added, when eventide came, the Sikh landlord and his untouchable farm hand both sat together to drink the same illicit liquor in happy camaraderie. It is not that caste does not exist in Punjab. It is just that its role is marginal.

The Punjab.

* #6 - p. 26, 27

Isn't there any way we can keep these holy places safe from *Pandas* who only succeed in making themselves a perfect nuisance? *Pandas* and beggars are the bane of Hinduism whether at Pushkar, Banaras, Prayag, Nasik or Pandharpur. I went to Pushkar to pray, but left in holy anger.

Beggars.

* #6 - p. 66

The Pathans were once so desperately poor, up in those barren mountains, that raids for plunder were considered a legitimate way of life. Since several wives were allowed per man, these raids could also include the abduction of women. Writers also refer, in an embarrassed sort of way, to their propensity towards homosexuality. Women for duty, a boy for pleasure, a goat for choice. The unwritten Pathan code of honour is Pakhtunwali, the two most important rules being the necessity of revenge for insults received – murder being permissible – and the obligation to give hospitality to anyone who needs or asks for it. Walter used to say that if ever he had to choose a lifelong bodyguard he would take a Pathan. I think though, of all the races in British India, he preferred the Sikhs.

Since the Sikhs came under our rule in 1849, they have made our quarrels their own; in every campaign and minor expedition they have fought side by side with the British soldier... Two traits – a love of military adventure and the desire to save money – combine to lead them to accept service in distant lands... They are fond of running, jumping, wielding large clubs, lifting heavy weights, wrestling and quoit throwing, and join readily in hockey or football... They are very handy, obedient to discipline, faithful and trustworthy, though sometimes given to intrigue among themselves.

Then the Rajputs, second in his esteem:

In appearance they are fine muscular men who carry themselves like soldiers. Their complexions are fair when compared with those of Indians generally and they often give their moustaches or beards a fierce upward twirl. They are particular about their clothing and spend much money on it... In all their habits they are scrupulously clean and are frugal livers. They are fond of all sorts of athletic exercises and sport and many of them are splendid horsemen. Very proud, they are particularly sensitive to an affront and are jealous about their women.

Pathans, Sikhs, and Rajputs.

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* #14 - p. 95, 116

He pointed out that the missionaries had failed because they insisted on keeping up their European way of life. Could one imagine such a missionary sleeping in a native hut, living on native food, and going on foot from village to village in June? This of course was an exaggeration; but simple souls had to be won, and Jesus had recognized that. The missionaries in India tended to be intellectuals. And how could Christianity, with the doctrine of love and humility, work so long as white Christians regarded dark-skinned Christians as niggers?

Another great problem was that Indian converts to Christianity had to contend with the ugly social consequences of losing caste among their fellows, and were likely to be ostracized by their families and friends. The real business of Europeans was not so much to evangelize, but to educate, enlighten and fight against superstition.

Christian missionaries.

* #14 - p. 422, 423

In the temple of Gangadwara three priests were chanting Vedas before a stone lingam. They continued hour after hour, taking it in turns. Siva had been discovered in bed with his wife Durga by Brahma, Vishnu and other gods. He had been so drunk that he had not thought it necessary to stop. The majority, all except Vishnu and a few of the broader-minded, thought them nasty and brutish and said so. Siva and Durga died of shame in the position in which they were discovered; but before they expired Siva expressed the wish that mankind should worship the act manifest in the form which he now took to himself, the lingam. "All who worship me," he said, "in the form of lingam will attain the objects of their desire and a place in Kailasa!" Kailasa is the paradise of Siva, a 22,000-foot mountain

Lingam sitting.

[But the ghats and the city above it, however many temples it contained, were nothing but a backdrop to the enactment of a ritual, incessantly performed, that was as natural and as necessary as the air they breathed and the water itself to the participants, but in which one could have no real part. However well-intentioned he might be, and however anxious to participate, for a European to bathe in the Ganges at Banaras was simply for him to have a bath. It was as if a Hindu, having attended a Mass out of curiosity, decided to take Communion; and although it undoubtedly had the capacity to engulf sin, the river did not here have the icy clarity that it had at Hardwar or the sheer volume that it had at the Sangam at Allahabad, or that rare beauty that it had on the lonely reaches of the river that had made it irresistible even to the uninitiated.]

Varanasi.

* #11 - p. 218, 219

Little bands of men and women who had travelled here together from their villages, some of them very old with skin like crumpled parchment, the women singing sadly but triumphantly, lurched barefooted across the silt towards the pragwals, evil-looking men who performed their duties with an air of patient cynicism, in contrast with that of the pilgrims themselves who wore expressions of joy. They had all been shaven with varying degrees of severity in the barbers' quarter: women from the south and widows had had their head completely shaven; the men were left with their chhotis, the small tufts on the backs of their skulls, and those who had moustaches, but whose fathers were still alive, had been allowed to retain them; natives of Allahabad were allowed to keep their hair; Sikhs gave up a ritual lock or two. At one time the hair was buried on the shore of the river; now it was taken away and consigned to a deep part of the Ganges downstream. Like pilgrims everywhere they were not allowed much peace: shifty-looking men offered to guard their clothes while they were bathing; the dreadful loud-speakers exhorted them not to surrender their clothes to these same shifty-looking men and, at the same time, urged them to bathe and go away; boatmen importuned them; policemen and officious young men wearing armbands tried to move them on, but they were in a state bordering on ecstasy, and were oblivious to everything but the river which they had come so far to see, bathe in and perhaps to die by this very morning; for some of them were so decrepit that it seemed impossible that they could survive the sudden shock of the immersion.

The women dressed in saris, the men in loin-cloths, they entered the river, dunking themselves in it, drinking it, taking it in their cupped hands and letting it run three times between their fingers with their faces towards the still invisible sun. Shivering but happy and, if they were fortunate enough to possess them, dressed in clean clothes, they allowed the pragwals to rub their foreheads with ashes or sandalwood and make the tilak mark. They offered flowers and milk to the river, and those who had never been there before bought half-coconuts from the pragwals and launched the shells filled with marigolds on the water, which were afterwards appropriated by the pragwals to be sold again. New or old pilgrims, these clients were his for ever, and so would their descendants be and their names would be inscribed in one of his books, according to their caste, as they had been for centuries.

The sun rose as a ball of fire, but was almost immediately enveloped in cloud. A cool wind rose and the dust with it, enveloping the long, dun-coloured columns which were moving towards the sangam and those whiter ones which were moving away from it. The camps of the pragwals were labyrinths of thatched huts and tent-like constructions in which saris and dhotis and loin-cloths hung on thickets of bamboo poles drying in the wind and the smoke of dung fires. Over them, on longer poles flew their banners, the rallying places of their clients who squatted cheek by jowl below them in a dense mass, cooking, waiting for their clothes to dry, or merely waiting. There were banners with European soldiers on them in uniforms dating from the time of the East India Company and there were banners decorated with gods. Some poles had baskets and other homely objects lashed to the top of them instead of flags. One had an umbrella.

Varanasi in the morning.

* #11 - p. 230, 231

To traverse it was to be transported into the Dark Ages. They were dressed in rags the colour of the silt on which they lay or crouched, and they were almost indistinguishable from it. The air was filled with the sound of their moanings. There were lepers and dwarfs and men, women and children so terribly mutilated – without limbs, eyes, faces, some with none of these adjuncts – that they bore scarcely any resemblance to humanity at all. Some lay contorted in little carts with broken wheels. Each had his or her begging bowl and a piece of sacking with a little rice spread on it, put there in much the same way as a cloakroom attendant at Claridge's leaves a few shillings in a plate to show that he is not averse to being tipped. The lepers were the most terrible of all, with fingers like black knots and with white crusts for eyes, or else a ghastly jelly where the eyes should have been. And to each of them the returning bathers, rich or poor, threw a few grains of rice and a few paise, confident that by so doing they were at least ensuring themselves merit in this world and perhaps even a little in the next.

"Why are you taking photographs of these people?" said a highly civilised Brahman. "What will people think of India if you show pictures such as these?" He was genuinely angry.

He delicately sprinkled a handful of rice on the sacking of the beggar in front of him, looked at me with disdain, and went on his way.

There were mendicant sadhus, men lying on beds of thorns with a carefully concealed cushion to take their weight but still uncomfortable enough, and there were others with iron skewers through their tongues. These were the side-shows, together with the children six or seven years old, who had been skilfully made up as sadhus by their proprietors in little lean-to sheds which had been set up against the wall of the Fort for this purpose. They sat, cross-legged, plastered with mud and ashes, eyes downcast, garlanded with flowers, sadly ringing their little silver bells. This was a world with its strange constructions, barrels on the end of long poles, tented encampments and limbless creatures such as both Breughel and Hieronymus Bosch knew, and one that they would have understood.

Lepers and Sadhus.

* #11 - p. 231, 232

The extraordinary spectacle of Puri is merely one of many epic demonstrations of the strength of belief in India and an aspect of its awesomeness. There are many other festivals, ritual dunkings and anointings, that draw people by the million. Just as importantly, there are innumerable and commonplace rites, celebrations and observances. On any city pavement you may have to skirt a religious painting, fashioned with powder, chalk and petals, and perhaps finished off with a small brass oil lamp and incense straws: a small act of devotion. There are numerous small shrines in the streets, where candles burn and homegoing workers stop to offer puja or homage, just as there are in almost every village in the land. Religion is a dominant force in the country and its influence and symbolism are embedded and pervasive. Taxi dashboards are often decorated with religious images, and cars, lorries and rickshaws are painted with swastikas, the most ancient of Hindu religious symbols. Many homes have shrines and the wealthy may have a small room set aside for worship. The calendar is peppered with religious holidays, and there are only a few secular ones. Most Indians, about 83 per cent, are Hindu and whether or not they profess atheism or agnosticism their lives are affected to a greater or lesser extent by one of the world's most powerful religious forces, the core of India, the heartbeat of the secular republic, with its roots in the Aryan books of knowledge first written about 3,000 years ago.

It is difficult for anyone with a western background to explain Hinduism satisfactorily in western terms, probably impossible, and I am unwilling to venture beyond what little I have observed of it; although, as I have indicated, I saw something of its influence almost every day I spent in India. Religion is a daily business, seamless and pervasive.

Hinduism is both a religious and a social system, the religious part being no more important than the social, and no aspect of it being more important than another. It is indivisible and all embracing, so that the esoteric part is no more significant than the material. It is a framework for dealing with natural and supernatural, providing places for all manner of beliefs and superstitions. It is a sponge, admitting far more than it prohibits, and sets little store by dogma. The existence of an omnipotent force is recognized, but this god-alone is by no means the central exclusive focus in a religion which admits millions of gods and allows immense freedom of worship. The spiritual and superstitious can be blended, permitting limited notions of heresy. You can shout at your god if he or she displeases you, and withhold your offerings as long as your sulk lasts. The incomprehensible ultimate force is not worshipped and its existence is considered only by a few sages. Hindus are too practical to want to spend much time considering the esoteric. The lesser gods and forces are more comprehensible and relevant, and include the sun, the sky, planets, mountains, rivers, snakes, trees and the phallus, the creative force. People may worship ancestors, and have regard for ghosts.

Hinduism is based on birth and behaviour in life, the religious and the social elements being stitched together by the idea of dharma, the fulfilling of one's duty dictated by conscience, social background, personality and custom. It is a powerful idea, being a code for living, and is linked with karma, the idea that present actions affect future existence, the soul being eternal and going through a cycle of births, deaths and rebirths, so that marriage, as the preliminary to birth, is pivotal. Hinduism offers solace and hope, a belief that present troubles are the wages of a former life's sins, that the future may be mitigated by unselfish and dedicated actions. And, if these actions are truly altruistic and not performed for the satisfaction of ego or conscience, they may lead to a form of liberation. This serene state may also be achieved through various pilgrimages, worship and meditation.

Nevertheless, the esoteric aspect of Hinduism has for many years been an attraction to certain westerners. But it seems unlikely that Hinduism is a source of a wisdom of an extraordinary kind or of wisdom superior to others: if this were so, India would presumably be a different sort of society. Indians tell me that the mysterious aspect, the esoteric, the supposed harnessing of forces through meditation and other forms of yoga, are not the most important part of Hinduism. It is a religion with its feet on the ground, a way of living in the world of flesh, money, food, fellows, sickness and difficulty. It enjoins its adherents to be materialistic, to create wealth.

A nice synthesis of what Hinduism is.

* # 2 - p. 63, 64, 65

The urn trundled through India for more than 1,500 miles, taking six months to reach the town of Sravanabelgola, about ninety miles from Bangalore. It was feted in every town and hamlet along the way, for it was the largest and most important of all the urns employed at the ritual bath of the statue of Lord Gomateswara.

The statue is fifty-eight feet tall, cut from a single granite rock 1,000 years ago, and stands, nude and at attention, on a hill. On a day chosen by astrologers and holy men it was ceremonially washed in milk, water, clarified butter and curds. It was showered with flowers and gold and silver coins and anointed with saffron and vermilion. This washing ritual, which normally takes place every twelve years, was watched by a million people.

It was another remarkable example of India's faith. In this case it was a festival of the Jains, a religion of severe asceticism, followed by about 3.5 million people, pledged to abstain from taking life in any form. This leads some of them to wear masks over their mouths to prevent them breathing in insects. Occasionally, you see them walking like small groups of ready-masked surgeons. These devotees do not eat after dark in case insects should get into their food and die. They run bird hospitals, drop grain near anthills for the ants to eat, and do not engage in agriculture for fear of killing worms. Some Jain monks, known picturesquely as the sky-clad, go naked in the belief that the achievement of nirvana, ultimate bliss, is inhibited by attachment to earthly things like clothes. All this, however, is rather like writing of Scotland and focusing on the kilt: Jains are significant and influential in the business world, as traders and bankers, and their commercial skills make them an important minority.

Festival for Jains.

* #2 - p. 71, 72

Sikhs, in contrast, have a distinctly martial mien and tradition. They are the most distinctive of India's minorities. They are proud, enterprising, assertive, pragmatic. Not too privately, they consider themselves a cut above the rest; and there is some justification in their swagger.

Although Sikhs make up only about two per cent of the people of India their contribution in many fields of national life is in much larger proportion. The turban is rarely in the background. As a soldiering people they retain a strong presence in the forces, about a tenth, and are also strongly established in the civil service, medicine, engineering and sport. They are in the forefront in commerce and in farming and are the champion cereal growers of India. They are the major road hauliers of the north and they provide many of the lorry crews, too. Most of the taxis in Delhi are driven by Sikhs with the light of battle in their eyes.

The Sikh religion was founded in the 16th century, originally as a pacifist, caste-rejecting offshoot of Hinduism, a rebellion against Brahmin dominance and dogma. It is based on the teachings of ten gurus and its heart is the book of scriptures known as the Granth Sahib. Sikhs became a military community at the end of the 17th century in response to Muslim persecution. To distinguish him from other men every Sikh was at that time enjoined to observe and wear the five kakkari: kesh, uncut hair and beard; kachh, short boxer pants; kara, an iron bangle; kanga, a wooden comb; and kirpan, a dagger. The turban is not compulsory but it became an essential part of Sikh distinctiveness. Sikh men were told to adopt the name of Singh, meaning lion, and women the name Kaur, meaning princess or lioness. Conflict is part of the Sikh tradition. In the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the faith's holiest place, there is a museum with numerous paintings of Sikh martyrs dying painful deaths at the hands of their oppressors. Children gape at the pictures of severed heads and butchered babies, and at the photographs, with enhanced blood, of more recent victims, the enshrinement of the tradition of defiance and blood sacrifice.

[illegible] When India was partitioned, Punjab was halved by the partition line and more than two million Sikhs poured across it to settle in Indian Punjab. Inventive and energetic, they made Punjab the most prosperous state in India, the wealthiest, healthiest, best-fed and best-educated. Drive along the Grand Trunk Road out of Delhi and on the Punjab border you see a sign saying: Punjab, Land of Milk. Punjabis drink five times more milk than the national average and buttered toast here means no boarding-house smear but a generous load. The view from the road is of a fertile land, of plump buffaloes and numerous busy tractors. It is a prospect that many Indians envy and they do not think Sikhs have much to complain about.

To Sikh is to find.

* #2 - p. 72, 73

"On its headed notepaper it describes itself officially as a sovereign democratic socialist, secular republic, a union of twenty-three states and eight territories. The democracy is lively, in spite of having had its air supply interrupted for two years from mid-1975. Socialism can hardly be said to have been practised with any determination, and the secular state is profoundly religious. The noble goals and rights of equality, liberation and justice set out in the constitution are cynically ignored by many in the ruling classes and for millions of people will remain unfulfilled."

Did I put this in the wrong category?

* #2 - p.237

HISTORY: COMING TO INDIA

A SMALL, HEARTY BAND OF SOLDIERS, ADMINISTRATORS, CLERICS, AND TEACHERS WHEELED, DEALED, DECIDED, CONQUERED, MANIPULATED, PULLED, AND PUSHED. A CIVILIZATION MIRED IN ITS PAST, STRUGGLING WITH ITS PRESENT ALONG A ROAD TO MODERNITY. THEY TREATED THE INDIANS WITH COMPASSION AND CONTEMPT, DISDAIN AND DESIRE, EQUALITY AND EQUIVOCATION. THEY GAVE AND GOT, USED AND ABUSED THE SUB-CONTINENT FOR SOME 300 PLUS/MINUS YEARS. AND EVEN TO THIS DAY A LOVE HATE RELATIONSHIP EXISTS BETWEEN THESE PEOPLE TOWARDS EACH OTHER AND THAT PERIOD OF HISTORY.

That age had begun on a soft summer day in a little Spanish port in 1492, when Christopher Columbus sailed off across the endless green seas to the edge of the world in search of India and found America by mistake. Four and a half centuries of human history bore the imprint of that discovery and its consequences: the economic, religious and physical exploitation of the nonwhite masses throughout the globe by the white, Western, Christian masses at its core. Aztec, Inca, Swahili, Egyptian, Iraqi, Hottentot, Algerian, Burmese, Philippine, Moroccan, Vietnamese—an unending stream of peoples, nations and civilizations in the course of 450 years had passed through the colonial experience; decimated, impoverished, educated, converted, culturally enriched or debased, economically exploited or stimulated, but finally, irrevocably altered by it.

Age of Imperialism begins.

* #7 - p. 293

THE RUDE ARCH OF YELLOW BASALT thrusts its haughty form into the city's skyline just above a little promontory lapped by the waters of the Bay of Bombay. The Bay's gentle waves barely stir the sullen green sludge of debris and garbage that encircles the concrete apron sloping down from the arch to the water's edge. A strange world mingles there in the shadows cast by its soaring span: snake charmers and fortunetellers, beggars and tourists, disheveled hippies lost in a torpor of sloth and drug, the destitute and dying of a cluttered metropolis. Barely a head is raised to contemplate the inscription, still clearly legible, stretched along the summit: "Erected to commemorate the landing in India of their imperial majesties, George V and Queen Mary on the second of December MCMXI."

Yet, once, that vaulting Gateway of India was the Arch of Triumph of the greatest empire the world has ever known, that vast British realm on which the sun never set. To generations of Englishmen, its massive form was the first glimpse, caught from a steamer's deck, of the storied shores for which they had abandoned their Midlands villages and Scottish hills. Soldiers and adventurers, businessmen and administrators, they had passed through its portals, come to keep the Pax Britannica in the Empire's proudest possession, to exploit a conquered continent, to take up the white man's burden with the unshakable conviction that theirs was a race born to rule, and their empire an entity destined to endure.

All that seems distant now. Today, the Gateway of India is just another pile of stone, at one with Nineveh and Tyre, a forgotten monument to an era that ended in its shadows barely a quarter of a century ago.

Gateway to India.

* #7 - p. 1, 2

by extending freedom to the vast, densely populated land Britain still ruled from the Khyber Pass to Cape Comorin, India. That superb and shameful institution, the British raj, was the cornerstone and justification of the Empire, its most remarkable accomplishment and its most constant care. India with its Bengal Lancers and its silk-robed maharajas, its tiger hunts and its polo maidans, its puggree helmets, and its chota pegs of whiskey, its tea plantations and its District Commissioner's Bungalows, its royal elephants caparisoned in gold and its starving sadhus, its mulligatawny soups and haughty *memsahibs* had incarnated the imperial dream

Tiger hunts and polo ponies.

* #7 - p. 6

No Caesar or Charlemagne had ever presided over a comparable realm. For three centuries its scarlet stains spreading over the maps of the world had prompted the dreamings of England's schoolboys, the avarice of her merchants, the ambitions of her adventurers. Its raw materials had fueled the factories of the Industrial Revolution, and its territories furnished a protected market for their goods. "Heavy with gold, black with industrial soot, red with the blood of conquest," the Empire had made in its time a little island kingdom of fewer than fifty million people the most powerful nation on earth, and London the capital of the world.

British Empire.

* #7 - p. 5

History's most grandiose accomplishments sometimes can have the most trivial origins. Five miserable shillings had set Great Britain on the road to the great colonial adventure that Louis Mountbatten had been ordered to conclude. They represented the increase in the price of a pound of pepper proclaimed by the Dutch privateers who controlled the spice trade. Incensed at what they considered a wholly unwarranted price rise, twenty-four merchants of the City of London had gathered on the afternoon of September 24, 1599, in a decrepit building on Leadenhall Street, barely a mile from the residence in which Mountbatten and Attlee had met. Their purpose was to found a modest trading firm with an initial capital of 72,000 pounds, subscribed by 125 shareholders. Only the simplest of concerns, profit, inspired their undertaking. Called the East India Trading Company, the enterprise, expanded and transformed, would ultimately become the most grandiose creation of the age of imperialism, the British raj.

The Company received its official sanction on December 31, 1599, when Queen Elizabeth I signed a royal charter assigning it exclusive trading rights with all countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope for an initial period of fifteen years. Eight months later, a 500-ton galleon, the *Hector*, dropped anchor in the little port of Surat, north of Bombay. It was August 24, 1600. The British had arrived in India. Their initial landing on those fabled shores toward which Christopher Columbus had been sailing when he discovered the Americas by accident was a modest one. It came in the solitary figure of William Hawkins, captain of the *Hector*, a dour old seaman who was more pirate than explorer. With a guard of fifty Pathan mercenaries, Hawkins marched off into the interior of a land whose myths and marvels had already inspired the imagination of the Elizabethan age, prepared to find rubies as big as pigeons' eggs; endless stands of pepper, ginger, indigo, cinnamon; trees whose leaves were so enormous the shade they cast could cover an entire family; magic potions derived from elephant testicles to give a man eternal youth.

There was little of that India along the captain's march to Agra. There, however, his encounter with the Great Mogul compensated him for the hardships of his journey. He found himself face to face with a sovereign beside whom Queen Elizabeth might have seemed the ruler of a provincial hamlet. Reigning over seventy million subjects, the Emperor Jehangir was the world's richest and most powerful monarch, the fourth of the Great Moguls.

The first Englishman to reach his court was greeted with a gesture which might have disconcerted the 125 worthy shareholders of the East India Trading Company. The Mogul made him a member of the royal household and offered him as a welcoming gift the most beautiful girl in his harem, an Armenian Christian. Fortunately, benefits of a nature more likely to inspire his employers' esteem also grew out of Captain Hawkins's arrival in Agra—Jehangir signed an imperial firman authorizing the East India Company to open trading depots north of Bombay.

A five shilling investment.

* #7 - p. 11, 12

almost by inadvertence. On June 23, 1757, marching through a drenching rainfall at the head of 900 Englishmen of the 39th Regiment of Foot and 2,000 Indian sepoys (native infantrymen), an audacious general named Robert Clive routed the troops of a troublesome nawab in the rice paddies outside a Bengali village called Plassey.

Clive's victory, which cost him only twenty-three dead and forty-nine wounded, opened the gates of northern India to the merchants of London. With it, the British conquest of India truly started.

Without having set out to do so, Britain had become the successor to the Mogul emperors who had opened to her the doors of the subcontinent.

British rule nonetheless brought India benefits of considerable magnitude—Pax Britannica and reasonable facsimiles of Britain's own legal, administrative and educational institutions; above all, it gave India the magnificent gift which was to become the common bond of its diverse peoples and the conduit of their revolutionary aspirations, the English language.

The most important consequence of the mutiny was an abrupt change in the manner in which Britain governed India. After 258 years of fruitful activities, the Honorable East India Company's existence was terminated as it had begun, with a royal decree, signed on August 12, 1858. The same act transferred the responsibility for the destiny of 300 million Indians to the hands of a thirty-nine-year-old woman whose tubby figure would incarnate the vocation of the British race to rule the world, Queen Victoria. Henceforth, Britain's authority was to be exercised by the Crown, represented in India by a kind of nominated king ruling a fifth of humanity, the viceroy.

Rudyard Kipling, that white Englishmen were uniquely fitted to rule "lesser breeds without the law." The responsibility for governing India, Kipling proclaimed, had been "placed by the inscrutable design of providence upon the shoulders of the British race."

British Rule - Plassey to the Mutiny.

* 87 - p. 13, 14

guess passage - 6 pgs

Ultimately, responsibility was exercised at any given time by a little band of brothers, 2,000 members of the Indian Civil Service (the I.C.S.) and 10,000 British officers of the Indian Army. Their authority over 300 million people was sustained by 60,000 British regular soldiers and 200,000 native troops of the Indian Army. No statistics could measure better than those the nature of Britain's rule in India after 1857 or the manner in which the Indian masses were long prepared to accept it.

The India of those men was that picturesque romantic India of Kipling's tales. Theirs was the India of gentleman officers wearing plumed shakos and riding at the head of their turbaned sepoys; of district magistrates lost in the torrid wastes of the Deccan; of sumptuous imperial balls in the Himalayan summer capital of Simla; of cricket matches on the manicured lawns of Calcutta's Bengal Club; of polo games on the sunburnt plains of Rajputana; of tiger hunts in Assam; of young men sitting down to dinner in black ties in a tent in the middle of the jungle, solemnly proposing their toast in port to the King-Emperor while jackals howled in the darkness around them; of officers in scarlet tunics scaling the rock defiles of the Khyber Pass or pursuing rebellious Pathan tribesmen in the sleet or the unbearable heat of the Northwest Frontier; of a caste unassailably certain of its superiority, sipping whiskey and soda on the veranda of its Europeans Only clubs. Those men were generally the sons of families of impeccable breeding, but less certain wealth; the offspring of good Anglican country churchmen; talented second sons of the landed aristocracy destined to be deprived of a heritage by primogeniture; the sons of schoolmasters, classics professors and minor aristocrats who had managed to squander their family fortune. They mastered on the playing fields and in the classrooms of Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Winchester, Charterhouse, Haileybury, the disciplines that would fit them to rule an empire: excellence at games, a delight in "manly pursuits," the ability to absorb the whack of a headmaster's cane or declaim the Odes of Horace and the verses of Homer. "India," noted James S. Mill, "was a vast system of outdoor relief for Britain's upper classes."

It represented challenge and adventure, and its boundless spaces an arena in which England's young men could find a fulfillment that their island's more restricted shores

a

continued

and social climate might deny them. They arrived on the docks of Bombay at nineteen or twenty barely able to raise a stubble on their chins. They went home thirty-five or forty years later, their bodies scarred by bullets, by disease, a panther's claws or a fall on the polo field, their faces ravaged by too much sun and too much whiskey, but proud of having lived their part of a romantic legend.

A young man's adventure usually began in the theatrical confusion of Bombay's Victoria Station. There, under its red-brick Neo-Gothic arches, he discovered, for the first time, and with a shock, the face of the country in which he had chosen to spend his life. It was a whirlpool of frantically scurrying, shoving, shouting human beings, darting in and out among jumbles of cases, valises, bundles, sacks, bales, all scattered in the halls of the station without any apparent regard for order. The heat, the crisp smell of spices and urine evaporating in the sun were overwhelming. Men in sagging dhotis and flapping nightshirts, women in saris, bare arms and feet jangling with gold bracelets on their wrists and ankles, Sikh soldiers in scarlet turbans, emaciated sadhus in orange and yellow loincloths, deformed children and beggars thrusting out their stunted limbs for baksheesh—all assailed him. The relief of a young lieutenant or newly appointed officer of the I.C.S. on boarding the dark-green cars of the Frontier Mail or the Hyderabad Express was usually enormous. Inside, behind the curtains of the first-class carriages a familiar world waited, a world of deep-brown upholstered seats and a dining car with fresh white linen and champagne chilling in silver buckets—above all, a world in which the only Indian face he was likely to encounter was that of the conductor collecting his ticket. That was the first lesson a young officer learned. England ran India, but the English dwelt apart.

A harsh schooling, however, awaited the Empire's young servants at the end of their first passage to India. They were sent to remote posts, reached by primitive roads and jungle tracks, inhabited by few if any Europeans. By the time they were twenty-four or twenty-five, they often found themselves with the sole responsibility for handing down justice and administering the lives of a million or more human beings in areas larger than Scotland.

(6)

Like some Middle Eastern trader, the young officer moved from village to village, walking or riding at the head of a caravan of servants, bodyguards, clerks, followed by donkeys, camels or bullock carts carrying his office tent, his sleeping tent, his mess tent, his bath tent, and the food and wine to sustain him for as much as a month.

On some dusty plain in a jungle clearing, he stopped and pitched the tent that became his office and courthouse. There in a camp chair, behind a folding desk, a servant driving off the flies with a fan, he administered justice, the representative of the Crown responsible for almost anything. Absolutely alone, the only white man within hundreds of miles, with no communication except by messenger on horseback, and only his lawbooks to guide him, the young man three or four years out of Oxford was a sovereign.

At sunset, he repaired to his bath tent, where a servant filled a goatskin tub with buckets of water warmed over a fire. Religiously he donned his dinner jacket or uniform and, all alone—screened by a mosquito net, his tent illuminated by a hurricane lamp, the black night around him pierced by the call of jungle birds or the distant roar of a tiger—sat down to his evening meal. At dawn, he packed up his camp and moved off to take up the white man's burden in the next corner of his domain.

His apprenticeship in those remote districts eventually qualified a young officer to take his privileged place in one of the green and pleasant islands from which the aristocracy of the raj ran India, "cantonments," golden ghettos of British rule appended like foreign bodies to India's major cities.

Inevitably, each enclave included its green expanse of garden, its slaughterhouse, its bank, its shops and a squat stone church, a proud little replica of those in Dorset or Surrey. Its heart was always the same. It was an institution that seemed to grow up wherever more than two Englishmen gathered, a club. There, in the cool of the afternoon, the British of the cantonment could gather to play tennis on their well-kept grass courts, or slip into white flannels for a cricket match. At the sacred hour of sundown, they sat out on their cool lawns or on their rambling verandas while white-robed servants glided past with their "sundowners," the first whiskey of the evening.

In each of those clubs there was a corner in which a

man could briefly escape from India back to the land he had left behind, perhaps forever. Settled into a leather armchair, turning the worn pages of a month-old *Times* or *Illustrated London News*, he kept track of Parliament's disputes, the Empire's growth, the sovereign's doings, and the marriages and births, and most particularly the deaths of contemporaries he had not seen for twenty years. His reading completed, a man could go to the club's dining room. There, coddled by dark servants in flaring turbans, under a swinging punkah, or later a whirring fan, the walls around him hung with the heads of tiger and wild buffalo tracked down in a nearby jungle, he dined on the heavy fare of his distant homeland.

The parties and receptions in imperial India's principal cities—Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore, Delhi, Simla—were lavish affairs. "Everyone with any standing had a ballroom and a drawing room at least 80 feet long," wrote one *grande dame* who lived in Victorian India. "In those days, there were none of those horrible buffets where people go to a table with a plate and stand around eating with whomsoever they choose. The average private dinner was for thirty-five or forty, with a servant for each guest. Shopkeepers and commercial people were never invited; nor, of course, did one ever see an Indian socially, anywhere.

"Nothing was as important as precedence, and the deadly sin was to ignore it. Ah, the sudden arctic air that could sweep over a dinner party if the wife of an I.C.S. joint secretary should find herself seated below an army officer of rank inferior to that of her husband."

There were the little traditions. Two jokes greeted every visitor: "Everything in India smells except the roses"; and "The government of India is a depotism of dispatch boxes made bearable by the regular loss of their keys." One never gave in to the climate. No right-thinking Englishman would be found without a coat and tie even in the most torrid weather. Mad dogs and Englishmen went out in the noonday sun; but when Englishmen or ladies did, they made sure to put on their topee, the high-domed, white sun helmet that was one of the familiar symbols of imperial India.

Much of the tone of Victorian India was set by the *memsahibs*, the British wives. To a large extent, the social separation of the English and the Indians was their doing. Their purpose, perhaps, was to shield their men from the exotic temptations of their Indian sisters, a temptation to which the first generations of Englishmen in India had succumbed with zest, leaving behind, suspended between two worlds, a new Anglo-Indian society.

The great pastime of the British in India was sport. A love of cricket, tennis, squash and field hockey would be, with the English language, the most enduring heritage they would eventually leave behind. Golf was introduced in Calcutta in 1829, thirty years before it reached New York, and the world's highest course was laid out in the Himalayas at 11,000 feet. No golf bag was considered more elegant on those courses than one made of an elephant's penis—provided, of course, that its owner had shot the beast himself.

Every major city had its hunt, its hounds imported from England. Regularly its members went galloping off in their pink coats and white breeches chasing over the hot and dusty plains after the best substitute India offered for a fox—a jackal. The most dangerous sport was pigsticking, riding down wild boar with steel-tipped wooden lances. The foolhardy, it was claimed, even went after jackals, panthers and, on occasion, a tiger that way. The Indian national game, polo, was avidly taken up by the British and became a British institution.

The British played in India, but they died there, too, in very great numbers, often young, and frequently in tragic circumstances. Every cantonment church had its adjacent graveyard to which the little community might carry its regular flow of dead, victims of India's cruel climate, her peculiar hazards, her epidemics of malaria, cholera, jungle fever. No more poignant account of the British in India was ever written than that inscribed upon the tombstones of those cemeteries.

From the oldest recorded English grave in India, that of a woman, Elizabeth Baker, who died in childbirth two days out of Madras aboard the S.S. *Roebuck* en route to join her husband at Fort St. George, to the lonely grave of Lieutenant George Mitchell Richmond of the 20th Punjab Infantry, killed in the Eagles Nest picket in the Khyber Pass in 1863, those graveyards marched across India, marking with their presence the price of British conquest and the strains of British rule.

Even in death India was faithful to its legends. Lieu-

tenant St. John Shawe, of the Royal Horse Artillery, "died of wounds received from a panther on May 12th, 1866, at Chindwara." Major Archibald Hibbert died June 15, 1902, near Raipur after "being gored by a bison"; and Harris McQuaid was "trampled by an elephant" at Saugh, June 6, 1902. Thomas Henry Butler, an accountant in the Public Works Department, Jubbulpore, had the misfortune in 1897 to be "eaten by a tiger in Tilman Forest."

Indian service had its bizarre hazards. Sister Mary of the Church of England Foreign Missionary Services died at the age of thirty-three, "killed while teaching at the Mission School Sinka when a beam eaten through by white ants fell on her head." Major General Henry Marion Durand, of the Royal Engineers, met his death on New Year's Day 1871 "in consequence of injuries received from a fall from a howdah while passing his elephant through Durand Gate, Tonk." Despite his engineering skill, the general had failed that morning to reach a just appreciation of the difference in height between the archway and his elephant. There proved to be room under it for the elephant, but none for him.

More mundane, but a truer measure of the terrible toll taken by disease and unknown fevers on India's English settlers, were the stones of legions of Deputy Superintendents of Police, Railway Engineers, District Commissioners, Collectors of Revenues and their wives. No one was immune. Even the wife of India's first viceroy, Lady Canning, living in her palace seemingly beyond the reach of India's microbes, contracted jungle fever and died in 1861. Who could imagine the anguish that life in India had meant for Major W. R. Holroyd, Director of Public Instruction, Punjab, when he sadly inscribed on his wife's tombstone: "She died at Rawalpindi on 8th April, 1875, in sight of those mountains whose air one hoped would restore her health. Four little children are left in England unconscious of the depth of their loss and one lies here beside her."

No sight those graveyards offered was sadder, nor more poignantly revealing of the human price the British paid for their Indian adventure, than their rows upon rows of undersize graves. They crowded every cemetery in India in appalling number. They were the graves of children and infants killed in a climate for which they had not been bred, by diseases they would never have known in their native England.

Sometimes a lone tomb, sometimes three or four in a row, those of an entire family wiped out by cholera or jungle fever, the epitaphs upon those graves were a parent's heartbreak frozen in stone.

In Asigarh, two stones side by side offer for eternity the measure of what England's glorious imperial adventure meant to one ordinary Englishman. "April 19, 1845. Alexander, 7 months old son of Conductor Johnson and Martha Scott. Died of cholera," reads the first. The second: beside it, reads: "April 30, 1845, William John, 4 year old son of Conductor Johnson and Martha Scott. Died of cholera." Under them, on a larger stone, their grieving parents chiseled a last farewell:

One blessing, one sire, one womb
Their being gave.
They had one mortal sickness
And share one grave
Far from an England they never knew.

Obscure clerks or dashing blades such as those immortalized by Gary Cooper galloping at the head of his Bengal Lancers, those generations of Englishmen policed and administered India as no one before them had done.

Their rule was paternalistic, that of the old public-school master disciplining an unruly band of boys, forcing on them the education that he was sure was good for them. With an occasional exception they were able and incorruptible, determined to administer India in its own best interests—but it was always they who decided what those interests were.

Their great weakness was the distance from which they exercised their authority, the terrible racial smugness setting them apart from those they ruled. Never was that attitude of racial superiority summed up more succinctly than it was by a former officer of the Indian Civil Service in a parliamentary debate at the turn of the century. There was, he said, "a cherished conviction shared by every Englishman in India, from the highest to the lowest, by the planter's assistant in his lonely bungalow and by the editor in the full light of his presidency town, from the Chief Commissioner in charge of an important province to the Viceroy upon his throne—the conviction in every man that he belongs to a race which God has destined to govern and subdue."

A great reading on the British Empire in India.

Wars had been fought with China on the subject, the last 'Opium War' ending only in 1860 with the entry of French and British troops, under the future Viceroy of India Lord Elgin, into Peking. Dutch and Americans had also been involved in the trade, which was now made legal.

India had produced opium for centuries and was considered to produce the best quality. Already in Bentinck's time it was responsible for one eighteenth of British India's gross revenue; soon it was to rise to one seventh.

As a vice the drug was 'no less harmful' than gin or spirits, and even had a beneficial effect on the 'sluggish, unimaginative Tartar character'.

He had come to the sad conclusion that colonization by the white man in India, in the sense that it had happened in America and Australia, was at present an impossibility. There was no such thing as acclimatization for the 'settler', i.e. the planter and the merchant. As the years rolled by, it was a losing battle between the sun and one's constitution. If the European race were to survive in India, there would have to be an infusion of native blood. Most important of all, the seat of the central Government ought to be moved to a new and more salubrious spot, away from Calcutta, the 'city of plague'.

India and its opium production.

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* #14 - p. 419, 420

For unmarried officers Fatehgarh was an awful place. There was no club and no swimming pool where assignations could be made, and even if there had been there was no one with whom one could make an assignation. We were oppressed by the lusts of the flesh and there was no way of assuaging them. By the look of the young officers I saw on my first night in the mess, this was still true twenty-two years later. At that time there were still some regimental wives in residence, but for the most part they were the property of officers of field rank. Social intercourse was difficult enough with them; any other kind was unthinkable.

It was not a subject that could easily be put out of mind. It was omnipresent in a country in which the population had increased by more than fifty million in ten years. To me it was a source of wonder that the decrepit buildings of which the villages and cities were largely composed, did not collapse as a result of the vibrations set up by these multitudinous acts of creation, just as the walls of Jericho had fallen down at the blast of trumpets. Even the continous round of Hindu Festivals to which, as a keen young officer, I was not only invited but expected to go, and which the men celebrated with such gusto, were mostly of an unequivocally sexual nature; and the games of squash in the open courts which were like an oven in the late afternoons and the long route marches, both of which, because they were "exercise", were reputed to act as bromides, were to me, at least, stimulants rather than deterrents. /

Fatehgarh was an awful place.

* #11 - p. 151

The church at Bandel was built to replace one in the Portuguese fort at Hooghly which was completely destroyed when the Muslims under the orders of Shah Jahan, took the place in 1632. At the moment when the fort fell and the Governor was being burned alive, a Portuguese merchant, fearing that the iconocastic Muslims would destroy it, took the image of the Virgin and Child, swam across the Hooghly with it and was seen no more. The survivors of the storming of Hooghly, who were all Portuguese, were taken to Agra where the more presentable girls were recruited into the harems, the boys were circumcised and the men were given the choice of embracing the true religion or being trampled to death by an elephant in the presence of the Emperor. Among the prisoners was the Augustinian Friar João da Cruz but when it was his turn to be trampled by the elephant, the animal bowed down before him three times and lifted him up with its trunk and set him on its back. This so impressed the Emperor that he allowed the survivors to be released from their various bondages and sent back to Hooghly, loaded with gifts. He also gave the Friars a charter to build a church on land that was rent free and they were exempted from the authority of his officers.

The Portugese - the early arrivals.

* #11 - p. 279

Ambala, January 2 1854

You ask why the pigs are not eaten in this country. The reason is that they are unclean animals, i.e. there are no Uncles in this country, so in passing a village you see what I have drawn. Now don't show anyone this letter as to an unIndian eye it looks most disgusting, though the natives think nothing of it, but squat close by the roads and the pigs only live on that sort of thing, so do you wonder at their not being eaten.

A British caricature.

* #14 - p. 303

HISTORY: BACKGROUND TO FREEDOM

THE SEPOY MUTINY OF 1857 WAS THE FIRST OF MANY INCIDENTS LEADING NINETY YEARS LATER TO INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE. THE SEPOY MUTINY IN INDIAN HISTORY BOOKS IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE FIRST WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE - A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME - DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU SIT.

No civilization was so little equipped to cope with the outside world; no country was so easily raided and plundered, and learned so little from its disasters. Five hundred years after the Arab conquest of Sind, Moslem rule was established in Delhi as the rule of foreigners, people

apart; and foreign rule – Moslem for the first five hundred years, British for the last 150 – ended in Delhi only in 1947.

It has taken me much time to come to terms with the strangeness of India, to define what separates me from the country; and to understand how far the 'Indian' attitudes of someone like myself, a member of a small and remote community in the New World, have diverged from the attitudes of people to whom India is still whole.

Ill equipped and easily plundered.

The outbreak

The sparking off point for the Mutiny had been the arrest on May 9 of ninety sepoys at Meerut, about forty miles from Delhi, for refusing to accept cartridges greased as they supposed in pork and beef fat.

The men had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and had been stripped of their uniforms. On the next day their comrades had broken out in fury, murdering European officers and their families and looting houses and shops. In the small hours of May 12 the mutineers began their march on Delhi.

Mutinies flared at one place after another throughout the north, at Bareilly, Shahjahanpur, Neemuch; and sometimes the civil population was the first to attack, burning churches, mission schools and British-owned factories.

Villages were burnt down by the British, and anyone seeming at all suspicious would often be hanged after a trial that was a mere formality. Newspapers reported 'every tree covered with scoundrels hanging from every branch'. Another form of punishment was the blowing of prisoners from the mouths of cannons, a method familiar in the time of the Moghuls and indeed used by the mutineers themselves. A prisoner would be lashed to a gun, his stomach or the small of his back against the muzzle; and in the case of a sepoy if possible his face would also be smeared with the blood of a murdered European. Vultures became accustomed to these executions, and would hover overhead, skilfully catching lumps of flesh as they flew into the air, 'like bears taking buns at the zoo'.

Sepoy Mutiny.

* #14 - p. 289, 290

to bite a cartridge greased with cow's or pig's fat was more to the Hindus, and the Indian Mohammedans, than eating pork to a Jew, spitting on the Host to the Roman Catholic, or trampling on the Cross to a Protestant.' The 'atrocious' arrest of the ninety sepoys at Meerut had made the men into martyrs. In fact the grease had been made of five parts tallow, five parts stearin and one part wax. Later it was claimed that only vegetable oils were used in the tallow, but this is still questionable. At any rate no attempt had been made to disabuse the sepoys of the conviction that their religion was being tampered with, 'whether through blindness, ignorance, folly or recklessness'.

Charles warned against too much haste in abolishing Hindu practices that were repugnant to Europeans, such as exposing the sick on the banks of the Ganges, polygamy, obscenities in temples, and swinging from hooks pierced through the muscles of the back. Smaller matters like shaving one's head after a death were important to a sepoy. It had even become plain that the abolition of the practice of suttee in the late 1820s had caused grave unease among Hindus, since it had been a practice embedded in their religion.

Bite the bullet.

* 614 - p. 319

The Hindus had been far swifter than the Moslems to seize the opportunities that British education and Western thought had placed before India. As a result, while the British had been socially more at ease with the Moslems, it was the Hindus who had administered India for them. They were India's businessmen, financiers, administrators, professional men. With the Parsis, the descendants of ancient Persia's fire-worshiping Zoroastrians, they monopolized insurance, banking, big business and India's few industries.

In the towns and small cities, the Hindus were the dominant commercial community. The ubiquitous role of the moneylender was almost everywhere taken by Hindus, partly because of their aptitude for the task, partly because of the Koranic proscription of the practice of usury.

The Moslem upper classes, many of whom descended from the Mogul invaders, had tended to remain landlords and soldiers. The Moslem masses, because of the deeply ingrained patterns of Indian society, rarely escaped in the faith of Mohammed the rules the caste system had assigned their forebears in the faith of Shiva. They were usually landless peasants in the service of Hindus or Moslems in the country, laborers and petty craftsmen in the service of Hindu employers in the city.

This economic rivalry accentuated the social and religious barriers between the two communities, and it made communal slaughters, like that which had shattered the peace of Srinagar, regular occurrences. Each community had its preferred provocations for launching them. For the Hindus it was music. Music never accompanied the austere service of the mosque, and its strains mingling with the mumble of the faithfuls' prayers was a blasphemy. There was no surer way for the Hindus to incite their Moslem neighbors than to set up a band outside a mosque during Friday prayers.

For the Moslem, the provocation of choice involved an animal, one of the gray skeletal beasts lowing down the streets of every city, town and village in India, aimlessly wandering her fields, the object of the most perplexing of Hinduism's cults, the sacred cow.

Hindus took advantage of British education.

* 87 - p. 32, 33

Compare the Indian Muslim leaders' demand for a separate state with the demands of American minorities; why do the latter not try to set themselves up as a separate nation, as many Muslims regarded themselves in India. In principle, is it reasonable to expect people to break apart from each other as they obtain greater democratic rights? Does democracy, in other words, reveal disunities in a society which an undemocratic state would conceal?

Moslem separatist movement.

GANDHIJI

SO MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT HIM, SO MUCH MORE HAS BEEN WRITTEN. IN MY LIFE I'VE SEEN PEOPLE THAT MOVED NATIONS AND ENERGIZED THE MASSES - MOTHER TERESA, MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., STEVEN BIKO, AND OF COURSE, MAHATMA GANDHI. SOME PEOPLE SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE AND SAY WHY; HE DREAMED THINGS THAT NEVER WERE AND SAID WHY NOT - A LOOSE PARAPHRASING OF GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S FAMOUS QUOTATION.

—"Those who are in my company must be ready to sleep upon the bare floor, wear coarse clothes, get up at unearthly hours, subsist on uninviting, simple food, even clean their own toilets." Instead of gaudy uniforms and jangling medals, he had dressed his followers in clothes of coarse, homespun cotton. That costume, however, had been as instantly identifiable, as psychologically effective in welding together those who wore it, as the brown or black shirts of Europe's dictators had been.

Gandhi's means of communicating with his followers were primitive. He wrote much of his correspondence himself in longhand, and he talked—to his disciples, to prayer meetings, to the caucuses of his Congress Party. He employed none of the techniques for conditioning the masses to the dictates of a demagogue or a clique of ideologues. Yet, his message had penetrated a nation bereft of modern communications, because Gandhi had a genius for the simple gestures that spoke to India's soul. Those gestures were all unorthodox. Paradoxically, in a land ravaged by cyclical famine, where hunger had been a curse for centuries, the most devastating tactic Gandhi had devised was the simple act of depriving himself of food—a fast. He had humbled Great Britain by sipping water and bicarbonate of soda.

God-obsessed India had recognized in his frail silhouette, in the instinctive brilliance of his acts, the promise of a Mahatma—a "great soul"—and followed where he led. He was indisputably one of the galvanic figures of his century. To his followers, he was a saint. To the British bureaucrats whose hour of departure he had hastened, he was a conniving politician, a bogus messiah whose nonviolent crusades always ended in violence and whose fasts unto death always stopped short of death's door. Even a man as kind-hearted as Wavell, the viceroy whom Louis Mountbatten was destined to succeed, detested him as a "malevolent old politician . . . Shrewd, obstinate, domineering, double-tongued," with "little true saintliness in him."

Few of the English who had negotiated with Gandhi liked him; fewer still understood him. Their puzzlement was understandable. With his strange blend of great moral principles and quirky obsessions, he was quite capable of interrupting their serious political discussions with a discourse on the benefits of sexual continence or a daily salt-and-water enema.

His technique.

Their suspicions were strengthened as narrow-minded local Congress leaders persistently refused to share with their Moslem rivals what electoral spoils British rule allowed. A specter grew in Moslem minds: in an independent India they would be drowned, by Hindu majority rule, condemned to the existence of a powerless minority in the land their Mogul forebears had once ruled.

The creation of a separate Islamic nation on the subcontinent seemed to offer an escape from that fate. The idea that India's Moslems should set up a state of their own was formally articulated for the first time on four and a half pages of typing paper in a nondescript English cottage at 3 Humberstone Road in Cambridge. Its author was a forty-year-old Indian Moslem graduate student named Rahmat Ali, and the date at the head of his proposal was January 28, 1933. The idea that India formed a single nation, Ali wrote, was "a preposterous falsehood." He called for a Moslem nation carved from the provinces of northwest India, where the Moslems were predominant, the Punjab, Kashmir, Sind, the Frontier, Baluchistan. He even had a name to propose for his new state. Based on the names of the provinces that would compose it, it was *Pakistan*—"land of the pure."

"We will not crucify ourselves," he concluded, in a fiery, if inept, metaphor, "on a cross of Hindu nationalism."

The event that served to catalyze into violence the boiling rivalry of India's Hindu and Moslem communities took place on August 16, 1946, just five months before Gandhi set out on his penitent's march. The site was Calcutta, the second city of the British Empire, a metropolis whose reputation for violence and savagery was unrivaled. Calcutta, with the legend of its Black Hole, had been, to generations of Englishmen, a synonym for Indian cruelty. Hell, a Calcutta resident once remarked, was being born an Untouchable in Calcutta's slums. Those slums contained the densest concentration of human beings in the world, fetid pools of unrivaled misery, Hindu and Moslem neighborhoods interlaced without pattern or reason.

At dawn on August 16, Moslem mobs howling in a quasi-religious fervor came bursting from their slums, waving clubs, iron bars, shovels, any instrument capable of smashing in a human skull. They came in answer to a call issued by the Moslem League, proclaiming August 16 "Direct Action Day," to prove to Britain and the Congress Party that India's Moslems were prepared "to get Pakistan for themselves by 'Direct Action' if necessary."

They savagely beat to a pulp any Hindu in their path and left the bodies in the city's open gutters. The terrified police simply disappeared. Soon tall pillars of black smoke stretched up from a score of spots in the city, Hindu bazaars in full blaze.

Later, the Hindu mobs came storming out of their neighborhoods, looking for defenseless Moslems to slaughter. Never, in all its violent history, had Calcutta known twenty-four hours as savage, as packed with human viciousness. Like water-soaked logs, scores of bloated cadavers bobbed down the Hooghly river toward the sea. Other corpses, savagely mutilated, littered the city's streets. Everywhere, the weak and helpless suffered most. At one intersection, a line of Moslem coolies lay beaten to death where a Hindu mob had found them, between the poles of their rickshaws. By the time the slaughter was over, Calcutta belonged to the vultures. In filthy gray packs they scudded across the sky, tumbling down to gorge themselves on the bodies of the city's six thousand dead. ★4

A Moslem state out of the Hindu sub-continent.

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* #7 - p. 34, 35, 36

Beside him, carefully pommed, were the dentures he wore only when eating and the steel-rimmed glasses through which he usually peered out at the world. A tiny man, barely five feet tall, he weighed 114 pounds; all arms and legs, like an adolescent whose trunk has yet to rival the growth of his limbs. Nature had meant

Gandhi's face to be ugly. His ears flared out from his oversized head like the handles of a sugar bowl. His nose buttressed by squat, flaring nostrils thrust its heavy beak over a sparse white mustache. Without his dentures, his full lips collapsed over his toothless gums. Yet Gandhi's face radiated a peculiar beauty, because it was constantly animated, reflecting with the quickly shifting patterns of a lantern camera his changing moods and his impish humor.

Five feet tall, 114 pounds.

HISTORY:THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

IN ITS MOMENT OF TRIUMPH AND GREAT JOY, A TRAGEDY OF HORRIFIC HUMAN PROPORTIONS SETTLED UPON THE SUB-CONTINENT. PEOPLE WHO LIVED SIDE BY SIDE FOR GENERATIONS IN PEACE SET UPON THEIR NEIGHBORS WITH A VENGEANCE AND VIOLENCE. LIKE THE BIBLICAL ADAGE IT TRULY WAS AN EYE FOR AN EYE. ALL WERE TO BLAME - HINDU, MOSLEM, SIKH, AND CHRISTIAN, THOSE WHO SAT BY AND THOSE WHO INFLAMED THE POPULACE WITH POLEMICS. EVEN THE BRITISH WHO FOR A CENTURY OR MORE TRIED TO PRESERVE THE RAJ BY PREYING UPON BURIED ANIMOSITIES EARN NO SOBRIQUETS FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today

A British soldier's lament.

* #6 - p. 38

ed. It was one of the sublime paradoxes of history that at this critical juncture, when Britain was at last ready to give India her freedom, she could not find a way to do so. What should have been Britain's finest hour in India seemed destined to become a nightmare of unsurpassed horror. She had conquered and ruled India with what was, by the colonial standard, relatively little bloodshed. Her leaving threatened to produce an explosion of violence that would dwarf in scale and magnitude anything she had experienced in three and a half centuries there.

The root of the Indian problem was the age-old antagonism between India's 300 million Hindus and 100 million Moslems. Sustained by tradition, by antipathetic religions, by economic differences subtly exacerbated through the years by Britain's own policy of divide and rule, their conflict had reached a boiling point. The leaders of India's 100 million Moslems now demanded that Britain destroy the unity she had so painstakingly created and give them an Islamic state of their own. The cost of denying them their state, they warned, would be the bloodiest civil war in Asian history.

Just as determined to resist their demands were the leaders of the Congress Party, representing most of India's 300 million Hindus. To them, the division of the subcontinent would be a mutilation of their historic homeland, an act almost sacrilegious in its nature.

Britain was trapped between those two apparently irreconcilable demands.

The age old antagonism.

* #7 - p. 8, 9

Gandhi had given India a new idea of itself, and also given the world a new idea of India. In those eleven years nonviolence had been made to appear an ancient, many-sided Indian truth, an eternal source of Hindu action. Now of Gandhianism there remained only the emblems and the energy; and the energy had turned malignant. India needed a new code, but it had none.

In a speech before the Emergency, Jaya Prakash Narayan, the most respected opposition leader, said: 'It is not the existence of disputes and quarrels that so much endangers the integrity of the nation as the manner in which we conduct them. We often behave like animals. Be it a village feud, a students' organization, a labour dispute, a religious procession, a boundary disagreement, or a major political question, we are more likely than not to become aggressive, wild, and violent. We kill and burn and loot and sometimes commit even worse crimes.'

"We often behave like animals."

* #10 - p. 45, 46

Whether an undivided India could have been brought to independence, and how long it would have lasted, must remain a matter for historical conjecture. What is certain, as Minoo Masani points out, is that an open civil war could scarcely have wrought more carnage and destruction than the upheavals triggered by partition.

> The price we paid is out of all proportion. There were about a million people killed on each side, thousands and thousands of women raped, an arms race that is still going on today, which has impoverished both countries, two wars which have already taken place, and goodness knows how many more in the offing. Independence was not worth having at this price, and it was vitiated from the beginning by the way it was achieved.

In the period from 1947 to 1948, the flames of communal violence spread so far and so fast that the Indian Army, without the aid of British troops, was quite unable to contain it. One of the officers entrusted with this task was K. P. Candeth, who later retired as a general in independent India. He explains how difficult it was to prevent trainloads of refugees from being butchered like cattle.

> The major problem was to guard these trains, because when they stopped at night the local villagers used to attack them. The worst places were in Punjab. For instance, I remember seeing a train come in from Pakistan and there wasn't a single live person on it; there were just bodies, dead and butchered. Now, that train entered India, and the people saw it. And the next Pakistan-bound train that came, they set upon, and the slaughter was incredible.
>
> And then there were huge walking convoys ... people coming in across the border, millions, wounded, without food, without clothes, carrying what they could, just streaming across the border helter-skelter. And then inside, where you had Muslim pockets, you had to provide protection for them, because otherwise they would be slaughtered. And every time there was a slaughter on the other side, or trains and vehicles came with dead bodies, there was a reaction on this side. When there was a reaction on this side, there was another one on that side; and so it built up.

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Millions died for and with independence.

* #15 - p. 16, 17

A man's executioner could be a friend, or a stranger. Every day for fifteen years, Niranjan Singh, a Sikh tea merchant in the Montgomery bazaar, had served a pot of Assam tea to the Moslem leatherworker who came rushing to his shop one August morning. He was setting the man's ration on his little brass balance when he looked up to see his customer, his face contorted in hate, pointing at him and screaming, "Kill him! Kill him!"

A dozen Moslem hoodlums raced out of the alley. One severed Singh's leg at the knee with a sword. In an instant they had killed his ninety-year-old father and his only son. The last sight he saw as he lost consciousness was his eighteen-year-old daughter, screaming in fright, being carried off on the shoulders of the man to whom he had been serving tea *for* fifteen years.

Robert Trumbull, a veteran correspondent *of The New York Times*, noted: "I have never been so shaken by anything, even by the piled-up bodies on the beachhead *of* Tarawa. In India today blood flows oftener than rain falls. I have seen dead by the hundreds and, worst of all, thousands of Indians without eyes, feet or hands. Death by shooting is merciful and uncommon. Men, women and children are commonly beaten to death with clubs and stones and left to die, their death agony intensified by heat and flies."

In Moslem areas, Hindus were sometimes offered the choice of converting to Islam or fleeing Pakistan. Bogh Das, a Hindu farmer in a hamlet west of Lyallpur, was marched with three hundred fellow Hindus to a mosque set by a small pond in a neighboring village. Their feet were washed in the pond, then they were herded into the mosque and ordered to sit cross-legged on the floor. The *maulvi* read a few verses of the Koran. "Now," he told them, "you have the choice of becoming Moslems and living happily or being killed."

"We preferred the former," acknowledged Das. Each convert was given a new Moslem name and made to recite a verse from the Koran. Then, they were herded into the mosque's courtyard where a cow was roasting. One by one the Hindus were made to eat a piece of its flesh. Das, a vegetarian until that instant, "had a vomiting sensation," but he controlled it because, he thought, I will be killed if I do not obey their command.

His neighbor, a Brahman, asked permission to take his wife and three children back to his hut to get his special wedding plates and forks, in view of the importance of the moment. Flattered, his Moslem captors agreed. "The Brahman had a knife hidden in his house," Das remembered. "When he got home, he took it from its hiding place. He cut his wife's throat then the throats of his three children.

Then he stabbed his own heart. None of them returned to eat the meat."

* #7 - p. 331, 333, 334

The division of Bengal at the other end of the subcontinent held out the possibilities of another tragedy. Harboring more people than Great Britain and Ireland combined, Bengal contained thirty-five million Moslems and thirty million Hindus spread over an expanse of land running from the jungles at the foot of the Himalayas to the steaming marshes through which the thousand tributaries of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers drained into the Bay of Bengal. Despite its division into two religious communities, Bengal, even more than the Punjab, was a distinct entity of its own. Whether Hindu or Moslem, Bengalis sprang from the same racial stock, spoke the same language, shared the same culture. They sat on the floor in a certain Bengali manner, ordered the servants they spoke to in a peculiar Bengali cadence, each rising to a final crescendo, celebrated their own Bengali New Year on April 15. Their poets like Tagore were regarded with pride by all Bengalis.

They were the descendants of a culture whose roots went back in time to the pre-Christian era, when a Buddhist civilization flourished in Bengal. Obliged to renounce their Buddhist faith by a Hindu dynasty in the first century after Christ, the Bengalis of the east greeted the arrival of Mohammed's warriors along their frontier as a release from Hindu oppression and eagerly embraced Islam. Since then, Bengal had been divided into religious halves, Moslems to the east, Hindus to the west.

If the Punjab seemed singled out for the blessings of the Divinity, Bengal appeared the object of its malediction. A land seared by droughts that alternated with frightening typhoon-whipped floods, Bengal was an immense, steaming swamp, in whose humid atmosphere flourished the two crops to which it owed a precarious prosperity, rice and jute. The cultivation of those two crops followed the province's religious frontiers, rice to the Hindu west, jute to the Moslem east.

But the key to Bengal's existence did not lie in its crops. It was a city, the city that had been the springboard for Britain's conquest of India, the second city, after London, of the Empire, and the great port of Asia—Calcutta, site of the terrible killings of August 1946.

Everything in Bengal—roads, railroads, communications, industry—funneled into Calcutta. If Bengal was split into its eastern and western halves, Calcutta, because of its physical location, seemed certain to be in the Hindu west, thus condemning the Moslem east to a slow but inexorable asphyxiation. If almost all of the world's jute grew in eastern Bengal, all the factories that transformed it into rope, sacks and cloth were clustered around Calcutta, in western Bengal. The Moslem east, which produced the jute, grew almost no food at all, and its millions survived on the rice grown in the Hindu west.

The division of Bengal.

* 87 - p. 127, 128

Caught in the crowd along the Mountbattens' route, the Sikh journalist who the night before had greeted independence by kissing a Moslem medical student suddenly thought, The chains are breaking all around me. He remembered how once, when he was a child, an English schoolboy had forced him off a sidewalk. No one could do that to me now, he thought. In the crowd, he noted, there were no more rich or poor, Untouchables or masters, lawyers, bank clerks, coolies or pickpockets, just happy people embracing and calling to each other, *"Azad Sahib!"* ("We are free, sir!")

"It was as though an entire people had suddenly rediscovered their home," noted one witness to that happy pandemonium. Seeing his nation's flag flying for the first time over the Delhi officers' mess, Major Ashwini Dubey, an officer in the Indian Army, thought, In a mess where we've been stooges, now there's no one above us but our brother Indian officers. Sulochna Panigrahi, an eighteen-year-old schoolgirl dressed for the occasion in a bright new sari, thought of Wordsworth's words: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven."

For many simple Indians the magic word "independence" meant that a new world was at hand. Ranjit Lal, the peasant from Chatharpur, assured his children that "there will be much to eat now, because India is free." People refused to pay bus fares, assuming that they should now be free. A humble beggar walked into the enclosure reserved for foreign diplomats at one ceremony. A policeman asked him for his invitation.

"Invitation?" he answered. "Why do I need an invitation? I have my independence. That's enough."

Across India, scenes of rejoicing similar to those in the capital marked this memorable morning. In Calcutta at 8 A.M., a horde from the city's slums swept through the gates of the majestic governor's palace. While the last British governor, Sir Frederick Burrows, and his wife breakfasted in a corner of the house, the crowd raced through the palace's spacious saloons. In Burrows's bedroom, some of those miserable creatures who had never slept on anything softer than a patch of dirt or the ropes of a charpoy celebrated their independence by jumping up and down like excited children on the bed in which the governor's lady had been sleeping an hour before. Elsewhere in the house, other Calcuttans expressed their joy at India's independence by stabbing the oil paintings of India's former rulers with the tips of their umbrellas.

"Azad Sahib - We are free, sir."

* 67 - p. 351, 352

= 256 = $\frac{(2^8)}{2^7 \cdot 2}$

To friends who suggested that it was now time to leave, she replied, "My dear, whatever would I do in England? I don't even know how to boil the water for a cup of tea."

A lady without her servants.

Cyril Radcliffe had rigorously followed his instructions in applying his scalpel to the map of India. With a few minor exceptions, the lines he had traced in the Punjab and Bengal were those imposed by the religious persuasion of the majority populations. The result was exactly what everyone had predicted: technically feasible, in practical application a disaster.

The line in Bengal condemned both parties to economic ruin unless they could get together. Eighty-five percent of the world's jute was grown in the area that had gone to Pakistan, but there was not a single mill for processing it in the new state's territory. India wound up with over a hundred jute mills and the port of Calcutta from which it was shipped to the world—but no jute.

The Punjab boundary over which Radcliffe had agonized so much began in a trackless woods on the edge of Kashmir, where the western branch of a river called the Ujh entered the Punjab. Following where possible the Ravi or Sutlej rivers, it ran 200 miles southward to the northernmost edge of the Great Indian Desert. Lahore went to Pakistan, Amritsar with its Golden Temple to India. Radcliffe's line sliced into two parts the lands and peoples of India's most closely knit, militant community, the Sikhs. Vengeful and embittered, they were now to become the principal actors in the tragedy of the Punjab.

The major controversy produced by Radcliffe's award would come over one of his rare exceptions to the majority-population principle. It involved a squalid little city called Gurdaspur near the northern extremity of the Punjab. There, Radcliffe had elected to follow the natural boundary line of the Ravi river, leaving the city and the Moslem villages around it inside India, instead of creating a Pakistani enclave protruding into Indian territory.

It was a decision for which Pakistan would never pardon him. For, had Radcliffe awarded Gurdaspur to Pakistan, it would not have been just that dirty, inconsequential city that Jinnah's state would have won. With it, inevitably, would have come that enchanted vale for which the dying Mogul Emperor Jehangir had cried in despair, "Kashmir, only Kashmir."

Without Gurdaspur, India would have had no practical land access to Kashmir, and its vacillating Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh would have had no choice but to link Kashmir's destiny to Pakistan. Unintentionally, almost inadvertently, Radcliffe's line offered India the hope of claiming Kashmir.

Radcliffe's map work on the sub-continent.

* 67 = p. 326, 327

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At the head of the platform Singh took his place and officially waved the incoming locomotive to a halt. As its great steel frame rolled to a stop above his head, Singh glimpsed a strange sight. Four armed soldiers were standing guard over the sullen engine driver. When the hiss of escaping steam and the shriek of braking metal died, Singh suddenly realized that something was wrong.

The babbling multitudes packing the platform were petrified, frozen into an eerie silence by the sight before them. Singh stared down the line of eight cars. All the windows of the train compartments were wide open; but there was not a single human being standing at any of them. Not a single door had opened. Not a single person was getting off the train. They had brought him a trainful of phantoms.

The stationmaster strode to the first car, snatched open the door and stepped inside. In one horrible instant he understood why no one was getting off the Ten Down Express in Amritsar that night. It was not a trainful of phantoms they had brought him, but a trainful of corpses. The floor of the compartment before him was a mass of human bodies, throats cut, skulls smashed, bodies eviscerated. Arms, legs, trunks of bodies were strewn along the corridors of compartments. From somewhere in that ghastly human junk heap at his feet, Singh heard a strangled sound. Realizing that there might be a few survivors, Singh called out, "You are in Amritsar. We are Hindus and Sikhs here. The police are present. Do not be afraid."

At his words a few of the dead began to stir. The stark horror of the scenes that followed would be forever a nightmare engraved upon the little stationmaster's mind. One woman licked her husband's severed head from the coagulating pool of blood by her side. She clutched it in her arms shrieking her grief. He saw weeping children clinging to the bodies of their slaughtered mothers, men in shock as they pulled the body of a mutilated child from a pile of corpses. As the crowd along the platform realized what had happened, hysteria swept their ranks.

Numb, the stationmaster made his way down the line of bodies. In every compartment of every car the sight was the same. By the time he reached the last one he was ill. Reeling back onto the platform, his nostrils impregnated with the stench of death, Singh thought, how could God permit such a thing?

He turned to look back at the train. As he did, he saw in great white-washed letters on the flank of the last car the Muslim assassins' calling card. "This train is our independence gift to Nehru and Patel," it read.

A Gift to/From Pakistan.

* 67 - p. 355, 356

Soon the anomalies that, as Radcliffe had warned, haste would produce in his boundary became manifest. In places, the headworks of a canal system wound up in one country, the embankments which protected them in another. Sometimes the line ran down the heart of a village, leaving a dozen huts in India, a dozen more in Pakistan. Occasionally it even bisected a home, leaving a front door opening onto India and a rear window looking into Pakistan. All the Punjab's jails wound up in Pakistan. So, too, did its unique insane asylum.

Everywhere the many and the strong assaulted the weak and the few. In the stately homes of New Delhi's Aurangzeb Road, the silver souks of Old Delhi's Chandi Chowk, in the *mahallas* of Amritsar, in the elegant suburbs of Lahore, the bazaar of Rawalpindi, the walled city of Peshawar; in shops, stalls, mud huts, village alleyways; in brick kilns, factories and fields; in railroad stations and teahouses, communities that had lived side by side for generations fell upon one another in an orgy of hate. It was not a war; it was not a civil war; it was not a guerrilla campaign. It was a convulsion, the sudden, shattering collapse of a society. One act provoked another, one horror fed another, each slaughter begot its successor, each rumor its imitator, each atrocity its counterpart, until, like the slow-motion images of a building disintegrating under the impact of an explosion, the walls of the Punjab's society crumbled in upon each other.

The disaster was easily explained. Radcliffe's line had left five million Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan's half of the Punjab, over five million Moslems in India's half. Prodded by the demagoguery of Jinnah and the leaders of the Moslem League, the Punjab's exploited Moslems had convinced themselves that, somehow, in Pakistan, the Land of the Pure, Hindu moneylenders, shopkeepers and *zamindars* (aggressive Sikh landlords) would disappear. Yet, there they were on the aftermath of independence, still ready to collect their rents, still occupying their shops and farms. Inevitably, a simple thought swept the Moslem masses: if Pakistan is ours, so too are shops, farms, houses and factories of the Hindus and Sikhs. Across the border, the militant Sikhs prepared to drive the Moslems from their midst so that they could gather onto their abandoned lands their brothers whom Radcliffe's scalpel had left in Pakistan.

And so, in a bewildering frenzy, Hindus, Sikhs and Moslems turned on one another. India was ever a land of extravagant dimensions, and the horror of the Punjab's killings, the abundance of human anguish and suffering that they would produce would not fall that ancient tradition. Europe's people had slaughtered one another with V-bombs, howitzers, and the calculated horrors of the gas chambers; the people of the Punjab set out to destroy themselves with bamboo staves, field-hockey sticks, ice picks, knives, clubs, swords, hammers, bricks and chewing fingers. There was a spontaneous, irrational, unpredictable slaughter. Appalled at the emotions that they had inadvertently unleashed, their desperate leaders tried to call them back to reason. It was a hopeless cry. There was no reason in that brief and cruel season when India went mad.

The bearers brought the remains of the first of this morning's claimants to Benares' boon to the river's edge for a last immersion in the Ganges. One of them pried open the jaws of the anonymous face on the stretcher, and sprinkled a few drops of water down the dead man's throat. Then they placed his body in a waiting pyre. The Untouchables serving the ghat covered the corpse with a pyramid of sandalwood logs and poured a pail of ghee over it.

Skull shaven, his body purified by ritual ablutions, the defunct's eldest son circled the pyre five times. Then an acolyte from the nearby temple to Ganesh, the elephant god, handed him a torch fired at the temple's eternal flame. He thrust it onto the pyre. A rush of flame burst through the log pyramid.

The mourners squatted silently around the pyre as it burned, sending an oily black column of smoke into the sky. Suddenly a dull "pop" came over the crackling of the flames. At the sound, a grateful prayer rose from the mourners. The skull had burst. The soul had escaped from the body.

Pop goes the.....

* #7 - p. 305

POLITICS AND POKER

THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY IS ALIVE AND I WISH I COULD SAY WELL BUT PERHAPS THEY LEARNED TOO WELL FROM THEIR WESTERN MASTERS THE ART OF KICKBACKS, JOBS FOR SALE, OUT AND OUT BRIBES, EXTORTION. BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA - THEY HAVE THEIR OWN VERSION OF TAMMANY HALL, MAYOR DALEY, AND BOSS CURLEY. IN SPITE OF THESE POLITICAL SHORTCOMINGS, DEBATES IN THE LOK SABBA ARE LIVELY AND MEANINGFUL. THE FREE PRESS, AND IT IS FREE, TELLS IT LIKE IT IS (FROM THEIR POLITICALLY BIASED(?) VIEWPOINT). AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE CITIZENRY TAKES THEIR VOTE SERIOUSLY, AND CASTS IT IN THEIR SELF INTEREST.

The bus took the villagers to the square before the Lower House and solemnly they descended and walked behind their guides to the door. The guards would not let the tattered procession enter. The guide went off in embarrassment to find someone in authority who would help. The villagers squatted down on the steps in the sun as they watched the passers-by. The members of the Assembly were arriving slowly, some in Western suits, some in white cotton with Congress caps on their heads, and a fine shawl draped carelessly around them. At first the villagers watched the limousines driven up to deposit these figures at the bottom of the steps. Then the repetitive similarity of the motor-cars bored them and they turned their attention to the people entering the building. Most of the officials glanced briefly at the group of villagers, and as quickly away. They must have seemed to be just another group of beggars or petitioners come to plague some poor deputy. Some paused to ask the guard who they were. Others protested that they should be moved on, that they disgraced the Assembly. One pair of members stopped before the villagers and addressed one another about them:

'Look at that. That is India. That is what we have to change. It is any wonder nothing progresses in this country?'

'Do they not make you ashamed, sitting there like that. Where could you see such a sight in America or England, I ask you? They sit watching us like cows.'

'Yes, and we are supposed to think that their votes put us here. Lucky we know better. It is enough to drive a man to emigrate.'

'This is what we argue about, two children for each family, and new ploughs and irrigation systems, and what do they do? Sit like beggars on the steps and probably have fifteen children each.'

'Not that survive, sir,' Uma said in Hindi. The two men started and hurried away into the building. Uma was fuming. Not even Jaydev dared address her.

Several more deputies objected to the presence of the villagers. Many were rude and spat in their direction. The villagers huddled more closely together but stayed silent. A portly man descended from a car, and two lackeys who had been waiting for him loudly addressed him:

'Are these your constituents, honourable sir?'

'The guard says they come from Bengal. Did you pay two paisa per vote?'

'Surely they must be family servants. These could not be voters,' one laughed. The official surveyed the villagers and asked the guard about them.

'They are villagers from Bengal on a tour around India. I would not let them in. The guide has gone to get permission for them to see the assembly, sir, though why I do not know. They should not disgrace this place. Why should these people want to see the assembly, sahib?'

'Well you never know, perhaps they are hecklers in disguise.' His two companions cackled at this and the portly man beamed. He spat copiously:

'Oh Ma, how I am tried. As if we do not have enough to do with all these border fights. Now I suppose we will be expected to ask villagers what they want for India.' He rolled his eyes to the sky and again convulsed his companions as he sauntered over to the villagers. He looked them up and down with obvious disdain and amusement, blew his nose loudly while winking at the two companions behind him and then leaned back. To no one and nothing he said:

'And what do we have here? A village road has been flooded, maybe? Or perhaps you want more of the foreign trucks to come and dig a well? Or has someone died who deserves a monument, perhaps? How do you come to be here in the capital? Do you go on a last pilgrimage to the site of Krishna's frolics?' Here his wink was lascivious in the extreme. The villagers stared in silence.

'Not talking? The big city has frightened you? Well, do not worry. Some of us are not frightened and we will look after it for you. You just go back to the village and be sure the rice is good this year. It was not a good enough harvest last year. Perhaps you do not have enough land? Never mind, just go back to it and forget your fright in Delhi. When harvest comes think of all those who share in your work.'

Again silence. Bablu, Jaydev, Naresh and Surendra were still, tense, staring at the backs of those in front of them. Elder De was shaking with rage. He polished his glasses over and over.

'Did you come to see your great government? Here India, the greatest democracy in the world, is ruled. Here we make the plans for your crops, we make the arrangements with foreign countries to give us aid, and we preserve the ancient traditions of political wisdom which have been known in India for longer than anywhere else in the world. This is where everything you do is governed. This is the people's assembly.' He gestured grandly and his two companions were joined in their applause by several other deputies who had stopped to listen and were grinning. He bowed to the applause and continued:

'What has made us great? What has maintained our independence of all other cultures? What has brought you on a truly holy pilgrimage to this revered centre of all things? My children, I shall tell you. We follow the simple path of Gandhiji and the great Nehru himself. We are the one party which procured the independence from the British and which now leads you to leadership of all the world's peoples. We follow the ways of the spirit, not of the machine. We are trained to lead you from illiteracy to the brilliance of the true knowledge. We will turn this gruesome unused

cont.

resource, these valiant of simple, spiritual people, are the greatest secrets the world has ever known. We do not know the shallowness of the West, we do not know the boring uniformity of the East. We know only unity amid diversity, the spiritual truth of India. We are the servants of India.'

The deputies on the steps behind applauded loudly. The two companions were openly laughing. Naveed stood. His height and dignity, and the stern gaze he settled on the little fat man silenced the group.

'We are cultivators of India. We do not wish to soil our eyes with the sight of scavengers and gatherers of refuse.' He turned around and sat, and the villagers turned with him so that their backs were to the speaker. Naveed's stern was stood rural stock, their gesture a time-honoured one of rejection and disgust.

The portly man faltered, looked at them in shock and then rushed into the building, followed by his two companions. Some of the other deputies had not understood and hastened close to the few who had. They laughed nervously and looked upon at the backs of the cultivators. Their shawls were worn and so grey were their hair. Their shoulders were bent with age. They had a strange power in that moment which none on the steps could emulate.

The Indian Parliament.

* 97 - p. 130-132

'Please tell us what is democracy and why is India the biggest democracy?'

'It is government by the people, and we have the most people who vote of any country in the world.'

'But you said voting was a choice?'

'Yes, of course.

'But we are always told by the money-lender where to put the mark on the paper. Where is the choice?'

'You should not be told by anyone.'

'Then how would we know where to put the mark?'

'You should put it by the man you think is the best, who will do what is right for you here in the assembly.'

'But why should any man in Delhi be concerned with our village? We have seen no one who knows our village.'

'Besides what could one from Delhi do for us anyway? It is we who must mend the ditches and plant the paddy and keep the pulse growing. No one here can do that for us. What can they do?'

'But I just explained about bills and the discussion of national issues and of the army and so on. All that is done here and is for you.'

'No, it is not for us. It is for the power and entertainment of those here, just as for the emperors below. We are not concerned with bills and laws. When a law is broken among us, it is we who suffer. We must find the culprit and judge him.'

'And usually we must pay the police to keep away and not come and take away our grain. What do we want with your Delhi laws?'

'But India needs laws to run as a nation. Without the laws you could not travel from Bengal to Delhi as freely as you have done.'

'That is true, but it needs railways not all those palaces to provide that.'

'Just a minute. You said government was by the people in democracy. Which people? Have you have only the rich, for only a rich man could leave his lands and come to live in this city all the time to do nothing but talk and flatter other rich men. Is democracy government by rich people?'

'No, democracy is all the people, the votes are equal.'

'How can my vote be equal to Elder De's vote? He can read the papers and knows what the men are saying, and I do not understand.'

'You still have choice, your view is just as worthy as his.'

'No, that is not true. His vote *should* count for more because he knows more. I can only do as the money-lender says, or nothing.'

'But no vote counts for more than another.'

'Yes it does. We have just told you that the rich alone are here, and that the money-lender directs the votes, so his vote counts for much more than ours alone. Surely, it is the same in other villages.'

'Then the democracy is not working.'

'What is government? Is it just another kind of ruler, as before?'

'Of course, of course, but now they refuse you and money so that you in prison instead of killing you quickly or making you a slave. Nothing changes because men remain as evil as ever.' Ravna spoke bitterly and the student was shocked by her interjection.

'You do not think this assembly is a wonderful thing, mother?'

'It could be wonderful, perhaps, if anyone could come and speak and be listened to, and if those who hold power were wise as Buddha and as virtuous as Sita herself. But I am old, see, I have watched many money-lenders and many policemen come and go. It is always the same. He who has wealth and power wants more, and is ever more greedy and more vile. Government here is a strange monument to corruption if what we know to be true of our voting is true all over India.'

'But there are many fine and wonderful men here, mother. Some you would see in a moment to be saints.'

'Like the fat man who spoke to us more rudely even than Rahu have spoke to his buffalo?'

What is democracy.

* 67 - p. 115, 116

The Constituent Assembly was elected on the basis of a franchise that limited the vote to 1.5 per cent of the population. And now 100 per cent of the adult population has suddenly got the vote. The consequence is that the representatives they send to parliament or the state legislatures have no idea of how the British constitution, which we regard as the model for our behaviour, functions, or what the rule of law involves, or what the position of the permanent civil service is in a modern state.

Despite mass illiteracy, the Indian voter has shown a robust common sense that is quite capable of seeing through the promises of politicians. A typical example is that of a Chief Minister's wife, campaigning in one of the more backward parts of northern India, who was asked by the villagers: 'If you can't provide us with kerosene and cooking oil during an election campaign, what hope have we got when it's all over?'

Illiterate but sophisticated.

Anti-Sikh riots broke out in Delhi on the evening of the day Indira Gandhi was assassinated. They were the worst riots India had seen since the holocaust of partition. The police force collapsed, often collaborating openly with the rioters. Two highly reputable civil rights organisations, which conducted enquiries into the riots, maintain that local Congress Party leaders instigated the violence. One of their reports said: 'In the areas which were most affected, the mobs were led by local Congress politicians and hoodlums of those localities.' The riots spread to other parts of northern and eastern India. Only the Communist government in Calcutta tackled them effectively. The official figure of those killed – 2,717 – is appalling enough. Unofficial figures are even higher. Almost all the dead were Sikhs, some of them deliberately burnt to death by mobs.

Khushwant Singh describes his own experience of those two days when the centuries-old relationship between his community and the Hindus broke down.

> I got a frantic telephone call from my friends who were monitoring the rioters' movements. They told me [the rioters] were coming for me. I rang up the President's household and told him about the danger. All his secretary could tell me was: 'The President says you had better move to the house of a Hindu.' So I said, in as civil a tone as I could manage: 'If that's all the advice and help the President can give me at this moment, just thank him on my behalf.' I moved to my daughter's house next door – she is married to a Hindu. Then fortunately for me, through the intervention of [journalist] Romesh Thapar, who took a very active part in helping many people, members of the Swedish Embassy came and picked me up. I left my house with just my toothbrush and toothpaste and the manuscript I was working on. For the first time I felt a refugee in my own country. @ [KS], 405*

1. Gandhi's assassination and the riots that followed.

* KS = p. 136, 137

The news of the destruction was to be far more traumatic for the Sikhs themselves, as Khushwant Singh explains.

> It was the great breaking point; since then, the Sikhs have never been the same people. Whatever has followed – the tragedies that have occurred one after another, the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, the massacre of Sikhs in the cities of northern India – are all connected with that great blunder, Operation Blue Star. The rise of terrorism is connected with Blue Star and with what they called Operation Woodrose – that was after the occupation of the Golden Temple, when the army fanned out into the countryside to hunt for young Sikhs suspected of being terrorists. The whole history of India has changed, almost I'd say like the history of the freedom movement changed after Jallianwallah Bagh.

Sikhs have not been the same since.

* #15 - p. 134

Another political threat to the unity of India which is much talked about is the growing aggressiveness of north Indian Hindus. Professor Rajni Kothari, an internationally renowned political scientist, explains the reasons for their mounting anger.

> The feeling is that the majority community has suffered, that somehow because of the tremendous liberalism of the Indian nation, the Sikhs and the Muslims, who are the minorities, have done better economically and are still given greater opportunities. Again the Hindus feel that the Tribals and the Untouchables are given all sorts of reserved opportunities, and here are we, the large majority community, left at a loose end. I have even heard leaders, both in the government and in parties like the Bhartiya Janata Party, which is a Hindu party, saying that what the Hindus lack is a central church, a monastic order, a kind of clergy, like the Christians and the Muslims. Ironically the power of the Hindu myth, the strength of the Hindu identity, was precisely that it did not need churches, monastic orders and clergy. What kept the Hindu identity alive was the fact that there was no one Hindu.

The radical Hindus - a source of division.

* #15 - p. 144, 145

I wrote: "If I have to say it a thousand times, I will. Politicians of all hues will have to learn to curb their tongues if they do not want to let loose the terror of violence in the country. It was bad enough for West Bengal to go through a phase where killings were taken as part of the routine of daily life. Now violence is spreading throughout the country; leaders are stabbed and their deaths do not merit more than a passing paragraph in our politics-oriented press. The hymn of hatred we hear comes from alleged leaders who want scapegoats to hang their pet aversions on."

A museum like that would have been treasured with the greatest care and consideration by any state in Europe or America. In India we treat our past, as we treat our dead, with a certain amount of disdain if not unconcern.

The crime rate has increased. It is said that at least one person a day dies in accidents. Wrecked cars, overturned motor cycles are becoming a daily sight on the main roads. Buses are packed and invariably overloaded. Passengers do not complain and if they complain, nobody listens to them. Phones don't work in this paradise or work only by fits and starts; street lighting is a matter of someone's whims. It comes and goes. Mostly the lights are out. Baina Beach has become an eyesore. It is a port town and pimps and prostitutes are all over the place and people defecate openly. At Colva fish bones prick bare feet and sea-snakes brought in by fishing nets are left on the beach—an ugly sight. And, according to one local citizen, there is corruption, corruption, everywhere.

Within a decade, terrorism was being practised by all sections of Bihar society: the Government, the middle-class administrators, the police, the landlords, the peasants. Criminality now had become a way of life, with each segment of society pointing an accusing finger at the others.

All normal social mores were collapsing. Any way to survive was good enough. In late 1977, a survey in Bihar revealed the existence of over 20,000 "ghost" schools—one third of the total number of schools receiving State aid and patronage—that never existed! Salaries for teachers were being drawn regularly and names of students were being shown on fat registers, but the schools themselves never were!

Terrorism and hatred. 290

* #6 - p. 123, 108, 104, 74

But the unique nature of India, its conservatism, massiveness, passivity, opaqueness, apathy and nearly sanctified prejudices and rivalries, make it resistant to change. The injustices which shriek mockery at the ideals of the modern state's founders seem too widespread and embedded to be changed, almost too ugly to confront. It is true that there is care and compassion in India, and honest rage at offensiveness and hearts yearning for reform. But not enough. Minds cannot grapple. Anger evaporates. The people shrug. The rhinoceros skin of indifference thickens.

They are often used to give evidence in drinking, gambling and theft cases, but from time to time swear to tell the truth in more serious cases. In 1980 the *Indian Express* exposed a man in Delhi who had been called as a witness 4,000 times (he had the witness summonses to prove it) and had even been fined twice for failing to appear in court to give his false evidence. The newspaper compiled a list of stock witnesses after one of them had forgotten his lines in court and the police were forced to admit he had testified often.

Considering the way justice works, and the conditions and traditions under which the police operate, it is not surprising that policemen should employ such methods. The reputation of the Indian police is low. They are feared rather than respected. In 1903 a police commission report said: 'The police force is generally regarded as corrupt and oppressive and it has failed to secure the confidence and co-operation of the people.' Little has changed. A deputy inspector-general of police in Gujarat said at a conference in 1977 that 'the police throughout India are at best tolerated with contempt, and, at worst, hated and condemned as a brutal force.'

Corrupt - false witness/corruption.

* #2 - p. 96, 98

The absence of genuine witnesses can be overcome by the employment of people blackmailed or otherwise pressured to give evidence. The killing of bandits in battles is justified, but sometimes other lesser troublemakers, and the sort of people described in India as 'bad characters', are eradicated by police guns and are branded, after the event, as dangerous criminals and outlaws.

In 1980 journalists revealed that policemen in the town of Bhagalpur in Bihar had systematically blinded thirty-one prisoners in their charge by puncturing their eyes with bicycle spokes and weaving needles, pouring acid into them and covering the eyes with acid soaked pads. There was some evidence that more men had been damaged in this fashion.

Naturally there was an uproar in newspapers and in parliament. 'What are we coming to in this country?' Mrs Gandhi asked, in some anguish, in the lower house of parliament. The *Indian Express* said: 'Every Indian must hang his head in shame, and not only in shame but for complicity as well. Many of us have prospered in a society in which we find such fiendish cruelty is possible in the name of authority. Not only possible but, as the perpetrators are bound to argue, even necessary to maintain that blood-spattered excuse for preserving the status quo: respect for law and order. We have been self-righteously quick to condemn other countries where women have been beheaded for adultery and hands severed for theft. These punishments for proven offenders were primitive, but they cannot compare with the casual cruelty practised in our own country.'

Fifteen policemen were suspended; but, curiously enough, people in Bhagalpur joined a procession in support of the police. They said the police had acted properly, meting out punishment to criminals who had richly deserved it. They were angry that the government had announced an award of £800, an enormous sum, to each of the blinded men. Someone wrote to a magazine that 'only after police have blinded some criminals have the roads become safe.' Police officers and politicians also said that the public supported such harsh measures.

It has to be admitted that people in many parts of India do not have much faith in the workings of justice. They want results and prefer to see criminals dealt with summarily. I once saw a thief thoroughly beaten by policemen with sticks to the evident satisfaction of a large crowd in Delhi's old city. Robbers and ne'er-do-wells are sometimes summarily punished by villagers themselves, beaten to death or hanged from trees or beheaded: justice in India can be rough.

Police brutality??

292

* #2 - p. 101, 102

Corruption has been part of political and commercial dealing in India since ancient times and retains its place in a society with a considerable element of the feudal in its culture. Patronage and the using of office for profit and for granting favours have the sanction of long custom. Corruption exists in every society and in India is sustained for special reasons. Indians know well, as Orwell had it, that if all animals are created equal some are more equal than others. The caste system and rigid hierarchies have created a network of vested interests whose dealings with each other are carefully controlled for protection, profit and the maintenance of divisions. Some corruption arises from simple group loyalty, the pressures of which are very strong. Nepotism is hardly considered a crime. It is, rather, the proper discharge of an obligation. Family and caste come first and there is endless lobbying and string-pulling as people try to get their relatives into jobs, colleges and positions.

'Fixing' of routine necessities like licences, allowances, tickets and permissions is often done in response to family and group loyalties. These commitments are much more important than loyalty to some abstract ideology. 'Fixing' is also done for material gain, of course, and the receiving of money for such services is not condemned, for public office has always been regarded as a way towards the noble goals of enrichment, part of one's duty in life. Positions not only have status, they also have the envied 'over and above' that enables people to earn a more than average living.

An Indian looks in one mirror and sees a responsible man. He looks in another and sees an irresponsible one. Necessity, as Defoe said, makes an honest man a knave, and in India the forces of clan, caste and dharma contribute to necessity; although a quite naked avarice also plays its powerful part.

Bihar is not an island, of course. What happens here happens in some form in many parts of India. The struggles between castes, the rule of hosts of petty tyrants, the repression of the weak, the fight for a meagre existence and the intimate knowledge of poverty, are the enduring lot of most people, and this has not changed much in many hundreds of years. India seems to many who visit it to be hard and uncaring, long on ruthlessness and short on pity, a society better known for its elbowing than its embracing.

I cannot say whether India is more callous than it was 50, 100 or 500 years ago. The tyranny of the land and rulers and invaders have produced in this ancient civilization a willingness to bend reed-like before oppression and evil: the people's obeisance to power, their readiness to compromise, their resistance to change, their suspicion of those not their kin, are elements in the survival of the Hindus. They have bent and, like their religion, have accommodated.

A responsible irresponsible man.

* #2 - p. 106, 107, 113

A public servant does not necessarily think his position involves service to the public. The superciliousness of a clerk, the arrogance of an official, the way that deskmen push citizens around are the underlining of hierarchical position. Position is often looked on as a lever for making money in corrupt ways, which is one reason it is sought. A uniform does not necessarily remind its wearer of his obligations or convey an idea of service. It often seems to serve as a licence for rudeness, persecution and extortion, so that uniformed public servants are often not the object of respect, but of contempt and fear.

I would suppose that Indians are as greedy, venal, and fish-hook-fingered as most other people; they are also as fair and honest, as competent and incompetent. We judge them by our own standards, not theirs. They give priority to family or group over the broader interests of society; and while this is merely human, rather than Indian, it does water the ground for corruption in the Indian context.

Enforcement of laws and regulations is less efficient than in many other societies; and society is less well ordered so that those who should be above reproach, civil servants, policemen and others, are badly paid and badly supervised, and encouraged to rely on graft. Corruption has many roots – greed, need and cynicism among them – but Hinduism is not one of them.

Nor do I believe that Hinduism is a magic well, a source of knowledge or enlightenment unavailable elsewhere. Those skinny, scabby westerners in pink gowns, looking like prawns drifting through India in search of rainbows' ends, are unlikely to find anything they could not discover at home. India is materialistic rather than mystical, as the bank managers of gurus will testify.

Public service/private monetary gain.

* #2 - p. 294

In one benighted State I was told by people whose authority I have no reason to doubt, government jobs were for sale. Ten thousand rupees to get a Police Sub-Inspector's job. Twenty thousand for transfer to a fat district where the official, wearing the uniform of the Republic and sworn to uphold the law, can proceed expeditiously to bilk the citizenry under threat of dire consequences if the insatiable demands for hard cash are not quickly and quietly met. I now know that such things are true, when once this was mere hearsay. I have it on the authority of *The Times of India* which ran a couple of stories in December 1981 of theft in Bombay docks. Wrote *Times* reporter Praful Bidwai : "Terror stalks the docks and bunders of Bombay port where armed gangs of thieves, backed by powerful criminals *working in collusion with the police and port and customs officials* systematically plunder wharves and warehouses for high-value cargo."

He added: "The credibility of the police force as guardians of the law is extremely low on Bombay's waterfront. Yellowgate is the city's most prized police station as far as 'rewards' from an appointment there are concerned. The price paid for a transfer to the station varies from Rs 20,000 for a constable to Rs 1 lakh for an officer."

Jobs for sale.

295

* #6 - p. 10

Even living on the pavements is not all that cheap in Bombay, as Mrs Batliwala explains.

> Pavements have been captured by certain strong men, many of whom don't live themselves on the pavement but in neighbouring tenements. People have paid either for outright purchase of a 6 foot by 6 foot stretch of pavement up to 5000 rupees to my knowledge, or they are paying rent to the tune of 50 rupees per month. Another interesting example of how these musclemen operate is capturing public toilets. Most pavement-dwellers who have a public toilet prefer to use that to open defecation, naturally. Now, what these chaps do is to get control of certain toilets and charge people half a rupee each time they go to the toilet. When we were talking to women about some of their health problems, a lot of them complained of urinary infections and other related diseases. They said: 'We know why we have these problems. It's because we only go twice a day, and once a day if we can help it, early morning and late at night, because if we have to go more often than that, it means spending more than one or two rupees a day just to use the toilet.'

An Indian mafia.

* #15 - p. 70

There are ministers and leaders in the Congress Party who are hand in glove with the contractors. Some of the ministers and their relatives are even contractors themselves. Of course, they are not registered in their own names. There are certain honest officials within the Delhi Administration, but they are powerless and helpless because the politicians are in this particular racket, politicians not only of Congress but of other parties too. They are playing havoc in this sphere and making a lot of money.

Hand in glove.

* #15 - p. 65

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